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The Complete Writings of ALFRED DE MUSSET

THE TWO MISTRESSES · EMMELINE

TIZIANELLO · FREDERIC AND BERNERETTE

MARGOT

DONE INTO ENGLISH BY

M. RAOUL PELLISSIER

Hiding behind the Marquise, he droppea it on her hand

Vol. VI, Frontispiece

ILLUSTRATIONS BY

M. BIDA · FLEMING · CARTOZZO

VOLUME SIX

Revised Edition

NEW YORK

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THE TWO MISTRESSES

CHAPTER I

Do you think it possible, madame, to be in love with two people at the same time? Were this question put to me, I should say I do not believe it. This is, however, just what happened to a friend of mine, whose story I will tell you, so that you may judge for yourself.

Generally speaking, when it is a question of justifying a double love, one usually has resource to contrasts. One of the ladies is large, the other small; the age of one is fifteen, of the other thirty. To be brief, one tries to prove that two women, who are alike neither in age, figure nor character, can, at the same time, inspire two separate passions. I have no pretext to help me here, for the two women, of whom we are speaking, on the contrary, somewhat resembled each other. One, it is true, was married, the other a widow; one rich, the other very poor; but they were of almost the same age, both brunettes and quite petite. Although they were neither sisters nor cousins, yet there was a certain family likeness between them: large black eyes, the same fine figure, they were two female intriguers. Do

not be alarmed by this word; there shall be no *quid pro quo* in this story.

Before saying more of these ladies, we must revert to our hero. Somewhere about 1825, there lived in Paris a young man whom we will call Valentine. He was a somewhat peculiar boy, whose strange manner of living might have furnished material for those philosophers who study man. He consisted, so to speak, of two different personalities. Meeting him one day, you would take him for a man of position in the days of the Regency. With his jaunty air, his hat on one side, his almost childish appearance of happy good humor, a *Talon rouge* of times gone by, would have been recalled to your memory. The next day, you would see in him but a modest student from the country, promenading with a book under his arm. To-day, he rode in his own carriage and threw his money away; to-morrow he dined on fifty sous. With all this, he looked for a sort of perfection in all things and tasted of nothing that was not complete. When it was a question of pleasure, he wished that everything should be pleasure, and was not a man to purchase a joy at the cost of a moment of ennui. If he had a box at the theater, the carriage that carried him must be soft, the dinner must be good and no worrying thought must come forward when he left. But, at the same time, he could drink his glass of sour wine in a country

inn with good cheer and could take his place in the ranks for admission to the pit. He was then another being, and made no demur; but in his peculiarities he yet was logical, and, granted that there were in him two separate individualities, they were never confounded. This strange character was the result of two things—little money and a great love of pleasure. The family of Valentine was blessed with some means, but there was nothing more about the house than an honest mediocrity. Twelve thousand francs a year spent with order and economy would not allow starvation; but, when an entire family has to live on this, there are few entertainments to be given. At the same time, by a chance of destiny, Valentine was born with tastes that a nobleman's son might have possessed. The saying is, "Miserly father, extravagant son; economical parents, spendthrift children." So settles Providence, which every one, nevertheless, professes to admire.

Valentine had gone through his course and was now a briefless barrister, a profession quite common in these days. With the allowance made him by his father and what little he could make from time to time, he could be happy enough, but he preferred to spend all on one day and to be penniless the next. You remember, madame, the daisies, of which the children pluck the petals one by one. "Everything" at the

first petal: "Something" at the second and at the third "Nothing." This was exactly what Valentine did with his days; but the "Something" was absent, for this he could not endure.

So that you may understand him better, I must tell you a story of his childhood. Valentine slept, when ten or twelve years old, in a little room with large windows, behind his mother's bedroom. In this room, quite dreary in appearance, and encumbered with heavy and ponderous furniture, there was, among other things, an old portrait in a gold frame. When, some fine morning, the sun played on this picture, the child, on his knees on the bed, approached it with delight. While he was still supposed to be sleeping, waiting for his morning call, he would remain for whole hours with his head against the edge of the frame; the rays of light, playing on the gold, surrounded him with a kind of halo, in which his eyes, dazzled by the glare, reveled. In this position, he dreamed many dreams; a strange ecstasy took possession of him. The more the light increased, the more his heart seemed to expand. When, at last, he was forced to turn away his eyes, tired with the beauty of this sight, his eyelids would close, and he followed with curiosity the flitting of the cloud-like tints in that rosy spot which remains with us when we fix our gaze for too long on the light; then he would return to the frame and be-

gin all over again. It was there, so he told me himself, that he developed a passionate love for gold and sunshine, two most excellent things, no doubt.

His first steps in life were guided by the instinct of his native passion. At school, he mixed only with boys older than himself, not from pride, but from natural choice. High-spirited in his work, self-love helped him less than the hope of distinction. He would burst into tears in the middle of the class, when, on a Saturday, he did not occupy a seat on the bench of honor. He put the finishing touches to his humanities and worked with a will, when a lady, a friend of his mother, made him a present of a beautiful turquoise; instead of attending to his master, he studied the glittering ring on his finger. It was again the love of gold, such as a child can feel. As soon as the child became a man, this dangerous penchant bore fruit.

Hardly had he gained his liberty, so to speak, when he threw himself, without a thought, into all the pursuits of a son of the house. Born with a good disposition, and caring little for the future, the fact that he was poor did not occur to him, and he did not seem to dream of it. The world soon enlightened him. The name he bore, allowed him to treat as equals, young men who were his superiors from the point of view of money. Admitted among them. how was he

to imitate them? Valentine's people lived in the country. Under the pretext of studying law, he spent his time in strolling up and down the Tuileries and the boulevards. Here he was at his ease; but when his friends went out to ride, he must needs remain afoot, alone and somewhat disappointed. His tailor gave him credit, but of what use are clothes when the pockets are empty? Three-quarters of the time, he found himself in this condition. Too proud to live on others, he took great pains to hide the secret reasons for his carefulness, disdainfully refused invitations when he could not pay his way, and was careful not to mix with the rich only in his days of plenty.

This rôle, sustained with difficulty, was cut short by his father; he must enter some business. Valentine joined a banking house. Ordinary business did not appeal to him, still less his daily work. He went listlessly to his desk; he had to give up both his friends and his liberty. He was not ashamed of this, but he could not be happy. When the day of the "Golden Vein" arrived, as André Chénier puts it, a kind of fever seized him. If he had debts to pay, or something useful to purchase, the presence of gold worried him so much, that he failed to reflect at all. As soon as he saw the rare metal shining in his hand, he felt his heart beat and, weather permitting, thought only of rushing out to spend it. When I say rushing, I am wrong; you would

meet him on that day, in a fine, hired carriage, which took him to the Rocher de Cancale; there, reclining on the cushions, inhaling the pure air or smoking his cigar, he gently rocked himself, never worrying about the morrow. To-morrow, it was as usual, and he became once more a clerk; but little troubled him, provided that, at any cost, he had satisfied his imagination. A month's engagements in this way were swallowed up in a single day. His unhappy moments were passed in dreaming, his happy ones in realizing his dreams: either in Paris, or in the country, you met him in a tumult, almost always alone—ample proof that it was not purely vanity. Besides, he was extravagant with the simplicity of a nobleman who is merely capricious. A fine clerk, you will say; and he was naturally given his congé.

At liberty, and with nothing to do, temptations of all kinds presented themselves. With many wishes, plenty of youth and little money, one runs a great risk of doing foolish things. Valentine's doings were quite foolish enough. Always pursued by his mania for putting his dreams into practise, he gradually developed most dangerous ideas. It would occur to him to try what it felt like to be a man with a hundred thousand francs a year to spend. Imagine our giddy fellow worrying all day, neither more nor less, than if he had been the man in question. Imagine also to what

this may lead, if pursued with a little intelligence and curiosity. Valentine's reasoning, as to his manner of living, was pleasant enough. He pretended that every living being had a right to a certain amount of enjoyment; he compared the whole to a full cup which is emptied drop by drop by those who wish to be abstemious, but which he took at a gulp. "I do not count days," said he, "but the enjoyment; and the day I spend five hundred francs, I have an income of two hundred thousand."

In the midst of all this folly, Valentine had, at the bottom of his heart, a sentiment which should save him—his love for his mother. His mother, it is true, had always spoiled him; it is a wrong no one troubles about; but, in any case, perhaps the best and most natural wrong. The excellent lady who had given birth to Valentine did all in her power to make that life run smoothly. She was not rich, as you know. If all the francs secretly passed into the hands of her beloved child had suddenly been collected, they would, nevertheless, have made a fair sum. Valentine, in all his scrapes, had no other restraint but that of keeping his worries from his mother; but this followed him everywhere. From another point of view, this saving affection opened his heart to all honest thoughts. It was for him the key to a world which, without this, he might never have understood. I do not know

who first remarked that a being that is loved is never unhappy; but he might have added, " He who loves his mother never does a wrong." When Valentine came home, after some foolish escapade, almost helpless, his mother would come and console him. Who can count the patient attentions, the apparently easy kindnesses, the little unexpressed joys, by which love can prove itself in silence, and make life light and sweet! I will just give you an example.

One day that the foolish young man had lost his all in gambling, he returned in a bad temper. With his elbows on the table and his head resting on his hands, he gave himself up to his morose thoughts. His mother entered, holding in her hand a great bunch of roses in a glass of water, which she quietly placed on the table by his side. He raised his eyes to thank her and she smilingly said, " They were only four sous." They were not dear, as you see; nevertheless, the bouquet was magnificent. Valentine once more alone, felt the perfume reach his tired brain. I can not tell you what an impression this feeling produced, so easily obtained, so unexpected; he thought of the money he had lost, and asked himself what his mother might have done with it, she who consoled him at such small cost. He burst into tears and remembered the pleasures of the poor which, till then, he had forgotten.

These pleasures of the poor he estimated more

lightly as he came to know them better. He liked them because he loved his mother; he gradually looked about him, and having tried his hand at everything, he found himself able to understand everything. The chances of pleasure, the chances of pain. Is it an advantage? I can not tell yet. It may seem to you that I am joking, when I say that, as he grew older, Valentine became both more sensible and more foolish; it is the absolute truth. A double existence developed itself in him. If an eager spirit impelled him, his heart kept him back. If he shut himself in, resolved on rest and quiet, an organ playing a waltz would pass by the window and upset everything. If he went out after this, and, as was his custom, ran after pleasure, a beggar whom he met on the street, a touching word heard by chance in a fashionable play, made him pensive, and he returned. If he took his pen and tried to work, his pen would unconsciously be tracing on the paper the profile of some pretty girl he had met at a ball. A merry throng, gathered at the house of one of his friends, would insist on his staying to supper, and he would hold out his glass and drink a bumper; then he would fumble in his pocket, find he had forgotten his key and remember that when he returned he must wake his mother; he would excuse himself and come back to his beloved roses once more.

Such was this young man, simple and courageous, timid and proud, tender and bold. Nature had meant him to be rich. Fortune had made him poor; instead of choosing he took both courses. All the patience there was in him, all the reflection, all the resignation, could not conquer the love of pleasure, and his moments of greatest weakness could not encroach upon his heart. He resisted neither against his heart, nor against the pleasures which attracted him. It was thus that he became double, and that he lived ever at variance with himself, as I showed you just now. But this is weakness, I hear you say. He is certainly not a Roman; but then, neither are we in Rome.

We are in Paris, madame, and the subject before us is two loves. Happily for you, I shall paint the portraits of my two heroines in less time than I took over that of the hero. Turn over the page, they are about to appear.

CHAPTER II

I HAVE already told you that one of these women was rich and the other poor. You already guess why they both pleased Valentine. I believe I also told you one was married, the other a widow. The Marquise de Parnes, that is the married one, was both daughter and wife

of a Marquis. What is better, she was very free, as her husband was in Holland on business. She had not yet reached her twenty-fifth birthday, and found herself queen of a little kingdom at the end of the Chaussée d'Antin. This kingdom consisted of a little mansion, built with perfect taste with a great court on one side and a beautiful garden on the other. It was the last extravagance of a dead father-in-law, man of the world and somewhat of a libertine, and the house certainly showed the taste of its old master; it resembled more what was not so long ago known as *maison à parties* rather than the retreat of a young woman condemned to inactivity by the absence of her husband. A round pavilion, separated from the house, occupied the middle of the garden. This pavilion, which had only the one floor, consisted also of only one room, and was but an immense boudoir furnished with refined taste. Madame de Parnes, who lived in the house and was accounted prudent, never, so it is said, entered the pavilion. Be that as it may, lights were sometimes to be seen. Excellent company, fine dinners, handsome equipages, many servants, in a word, a goodly show, characterized the mansion of the Marquise. Besides all this, a splendid education had given her many attainments; having all that is necessary for pleasure with the exception of a soul, she, nevertheless, found means to have one; an indispens-

able aunt guarded her everywhere; when her husband was mentioned, he was soon to return; no one thought of slandering her.

Madame Delaunay, the widow, lost her husband when still quite young; she lived with her mother on moderate means, the results of much labor, and with such made sufficient. You must mount to the third floor in the Rue du Plat-d'Etain, to find her embroidering by the window; it was all she could do; her education, as you may see, had been badly neglected. A small parlor was her all; at the dinner-hour, the walnut table, kept during the day in the hall, was pushed into its place. At night, an alcove was opened containing two beds. But a careful cleanliness was apparent everywhere.

Despite all this, Madame Delaunay was fond of the world. Some of her husband's old friends occasionally gave small dinners to which she went, dressed in new muslin. As those without means can not afford a "season," these little entertainments took place all the year round. To be poor, young, pretty and honest is not an attainment as rare as is supposed, but it is an attainment.

When I told you that my Valentine loved both these women, I did not pretend to say he loved them equally. I can best get out of it by saying that he loved one and desired the other, but I do not want to go into fine details too

much, and which, after all, signify nothing beyond the fact that he wanted them both. I prefer simply to tell you what was passing in his heart.

What at first made him frequent these two houses was quite a bad motive, the absence of a husband in both the one and the other. It is but true that a semblance of ease, even if but a semblance, entices the young. Valentine was received by Madame de Parnes because she saw and received many, that was all; a friend had introduced him. To call on Madame Delaunay, who received no one, had not been such a simple matter. He met her at one of those little dinners I was telling you about, for Valentine went everywhere; he had seen Madame Delaunay, had taken notice of her and had danced with her; in fact, one fine day he found means to bring her a new book which she wanted to read. The first call once made, one can return without needing an excuse, and at the end of three months one may become one of the family; thus it is done. He who is surprised at the presence of a young man in a family that no one knows, would often be surprised to know how frivolous was the pretext which took him there.

You will perhaps be surprised, madame, at the way in which the heart of Valentine led him. It was, so to speak, pure luck. He had lived through one winter, according to custom, fool-

ishly enough though gaily. With summer arrived, like the grasshopper, he found himself destitute. Some were leaving for the country, others were going to England or to the watering-places: there are certain years of desertion when all one's friends seem to disappear; a gust of wind carries them off and suddenly one is left alone. If Valentine had been wiser, he would have acted like the rest, and likewise gone away; but his pleasure had cost him dearly, and his empty purse kept him in Paris. Regretting his improvidence, and as unhappy as one can be at the age of twenty-five, he was thinking of how to pass the summer, and of getting out of it, not necessarily virtue, but pleasure, if he could. Having gone out on one of those fine mornings, when all who enjoy youth seem to be out without knowing why, he could find, on thinking it over, but two people to call on. Madame de Parnes or Madame Delaunay. He called on both that very day, and having been surfeited on one day, found himself the reverse the morning following. Not being able to renew his visit before several days, he wondered what day would do; after which, he voluntarily went over all he had said and heard during those two hours which had since become so precious.

The similarity of which I have spoken, and which had not as yet struck him, at first caused him to smile. It seemed strange to him that two

young women in such different positions, and entirely ignorant of each other's existence, should appear so much like sisters. In his memory he compared their characteristics, their figures and their spirit; each one in turn made him love the other less or like her more. Madame de Parnes was a coquette, vivacious, lackadaisical and lively; Madame Delaunay was all this, but not always, only at a dance, and was, to a certain degree, colder. Poverty was no doubt the cause of this. At the same time, the widow's eyes would occasionally glow with an ardent fire which seemed to concentrate when she was at rest, while the Marquise resembled more a brilliant but fugitive spark, but was still the same woman Valentine thought; it is the same fire, there dancing round a blazing fireplace, here covered with cinders. Little by little, he came back to details; he thought of the white hands of the one passing rapidly over the ivory keyboard, and of the somewhat thin and tired hands of the other folded on her lap. He thought of their shoes and found it strange that the poorer was the better fitted: she made her own gaiters. He saw the lady of the Chaussée d'Antin, extended on her long divan, drawing in the freshness of the air, with her arms bare since the morning. He wondered whether Madame Delaunay had such fine arms under her calico sleeves, and for some unknown reason he started at the thought

of seeing Madame Delaunay with bare arms; then he thought of the beautiful black rolls of hair of Madame de Parnes, and the knitting-needle that Madame Delaunay placed in her hair while she chatted. He seized a pencil and attempted to put on paper the double image which he saw in his mind's eye. By means of continually rubbing out and redrawing, he managed to produce one of those fleeting resemblances which will sometimes give more pleasure than a more correct portrait. As soon as he had made this sketch, he stopped; which of the two women did it most resemble? He himself could not decide; at first it was one, then the other, according as the mood seized him. What mystery in a drawing, he thought; who knows, despite appearances, which of these two women is the happier. Is it the richer or she who has more beauty? Was it she who was best loved? No, it was the one that knew the better how to love. What would they do if, in the morning on awakening, they found they had changed places? Valentine thought of the awakened dreamer, and, without noticing that he himself was dreaming in broad daylight, he built many castles in the air. He made up his mind to go, the very next day, and make his two calls, and to carry with him his sketch, the better to see and study its defects; at the same time he touched it up, a lock of hair, another fold to the dress, the eyes larger, the out-

line more delicate. His thoughts went back to the foot, then to the hands, and again to the white arms; many other thoughts he had, till at last he found himself in love.

CHAPTER III

To fall in love is not difficult, but to know how to express it is hard, so Valentine, carrying his sketch, started out early the next day. He began with the Marquise. A lucky chance, rarer than we may think, so willed it that on this day he should find her just as he had dreamed of her the day before. It was in the month of July. On a wooden seat, heaped up with soft cushions, under a beautiful honeysuckle in full bloom, with her arms bare and in a dressing-gown, so might a nymph appear to one of Virgil's shepherds; and so appeared the marble-like Isabelle, Marquise de Parnes, to the eyes of our hero. She welcomed him with one of those sweet smiles which cost so little when one's teeth are good, and pointed out, somewhat nonchalantly, a footstool some distance away. Instead of sitting down, he picked it up to bring it nearer; and, as he was wondering where to place it, the Marquise asked him, "Wherever are you going?"

Valentine thought his head was overheated and that the untractable reality was slower than

his desire. He stopped, and, putting the stool down rather farther off than it was before, sat down, not knowing quite what to say. You must know that a huge footman, insolent and sullen, was standing before the Marquise, and was giving her a cup of hot chocolate which she started to drink sip by sip. The presence of this third party, the great care that the lady took to avoid burning her mouth and the little notice that she consequently took of her visitor, did not help to encourage him. Valentine gravely took his sketch out of his pocket, and fixing his eyes on Madame de Parnes, he alternately studied the original and the copy. She asked what he was doing. He got up, showed her his drawing, and then sat down again without saying any more about it. At first sight, the Marquise wrinkled her brows, as when one looks for anything, then she bent herself sideways, as when one has found it. She drank the remains of her chocolate, the footman went away, and the beautiful teeth showed themselves once more in a smile.

"It is better than I am," said she at last; "did you do this from memory? How did you manage it?"

Valentine answered that such a beautiful face did not need to pose for one to copy it, and that he had found it in his heart. The Marquise made him a slight bow, and Valentine brought forward the stool.

While casually chatting, Madame de Parnes inspected the drawing.

" I find, in this portrait," said she, " that there is a physiognomy which is not mine. You might say this was like some one who was like me, but that it was not I that it was meant for."

Valentine, in spite of himself, reddened and thought that, at the bottom of his heart, he loved Madame Delaunay; the observation the Marquise had just made seemed proof of it. Again he examined his drawing, then the Marquise, then he thought of the young widow. She whom I love, is she whom this portrait most resembles. Since my heart guided my hand, my hand must explain the feelings of my heart.

The conversation continued; they were talking, I think, of a ride they had had in the Champ-de-Mars the day before.

" You seem to be a mile away," said Madame de Parnes. Valentine got up and approached her.

" What a beautiful honeysuckle," said he, as he came near. The Marquise put out her hand, gathered a small sprig, and graciously offered it to him.

" Here," said she, " take this, and tell me if it is really myself whose face you thought of, or whether, while painting another, you chanced upon it."

With a little movement of conceit, Valentine,

instead of taking the flowers, laughingly held forward his buttonhole for her to place them in; while she was good-humoredly doing this, he stood up, and was looking at the pavilion of which I have spoken, the window-blind of which was partly open. You must remember that Madame was supposed never to come here. In fact, she pretended to somewhat despise this select and pretty boudoir, saying she did not like it. Nevertheless, Valentine thought he noticed that the brilliant colors and the gilded armchairs did not suffer from dust. In the midst of all this Grecian furniture, superb but uncomfortable like everything of the Empire period, a certain large and evidently modern divan seemed to stand out. His heart throbbed, I do not know why, when he thought that the Marquise used this pavilion from time to time; as wherefore was the divan there, if not to be sometimes used? Valentine seized one of the white hands which were decorating him and raised it to his lips; what the Marquise thought, I do not know. Valentine was looking at the chair; Madame de Parnes was looking at Valentine's drawing; she did not remove her hand, and he held it between his own. A servant appeared on the steps; a visitor was announced. Valentine let go the Marquise's hand, and, strangely enough, she abruptly closed the window-blind.

With the visitor present, Valentine felt rather

embarrassed, for he saw that the Marquise had hidden his sketch, as if by chance, by throwing her handkerchief over it. That was not his wish: he took the surest course, and lifted the handkerchief and possessed himself of the paper; Madame de Parnes made a slight sign of astonishment.

"I want to touch it up," said he, out loud; "permit me to take it away."

She did not insist on keeping it, and he rushed off. He found Madame Delaunay doing some needlework; her mother was sitting near her. A few flowers on the window formed the poor woman's only garden. Her dress, always the same, was dark in color, for she did not possess a morning-gown: everything superfluous is a sign of riches. A remnant of false elegance made her wear, nevertheless, earrings of bad taste and a pinchbeck chain. Add to this that her hair was untidy and that she had the appearance of an habitual lassitude, and you will readily understand that at first sight comparisons were not favorable.

Valentine did not dare to show her, in the presence of her mother, the drawing which he carried with him. But, when three o'clock struck, the old lady, who had no servant, left them to prepare the dinner; it was the opportunity the young man had been waiting for. He once more brought out his portrait, and risked his second trial. The

widow had not much penetration and failed to recognize herself, and Valentine, rather confused, found himself forced to explain that it was herself he had tried to represent. At first she seemed surprised, then delighted, and thinking that it was a present Valentine was making her, she was taking down a little white frame from the wall, and was removing a frightful portrait of Napoleon, which, since 1810, had been getting yellower and yellower, and preparing to put her own in its place.

Valentine at first let her go on; he could not force himself to spoil this moment of naïve pleasure. But the thought that Madame de Parnes would doubtless ask for her drawing again visibly troubled him; Madame Delaunay, who noticed this, thought she had been indiscreet; embarrassed, she stopped, holding her frame and not knowing what to do with it. Valentine, who on his side, thought he had acted foolishly in showing this portrait which he wished to keep, wondered how to save the situation. After some moments of awkwardness and hesitation, the frame and the picture remained on the table, by the side of the dethroned Napoleon, and Madame Delaunay went back to her work.

"I should like," said Valentine, "to make a copy of this little sketch before leaving it with you."

"I think I must be getting foolish," answered

the widow. "Keep the drawing which belongs to you. At the same time, I do not suppose your intention is to place it in your room or to show it to your friends."

"Certainly not; but I did it for myself, and I do not want to lose it altogether."

"Of what use can it be to you, since you assure me you are not going to show it?"

"It will serve to show me yourself, madame, and for me to tell your double what I dare not say to yourself."

Although this phrase, rigorously speaking, was but gallantry, the tone in which Valentine spoke caused the widow to look up. She cast upon the young man a look, not severe, but serious; this look worried Valentine, already moved by his own words; he rolled up the sketch and was about to put it in his pocket, when Madame Delaunay rose and took it from him with a timid, joking air. He began to laugh, and in his turn possessed himself of the paper.

"And by what right, madame, do you seize my property? Does it not belong to me?"

"No," said she, drily; "no one has a right to paint a portrait without the consent of the model."

With these words she reseated herself, and Valentine, seeing her rather agitated, approached her and felt emboldened. Was it that she repented of having shown the pleasure she had at first felt,

was it disappointment, or impatience? However, Madame Delaunay's hands were trembling. Valentine, who had lately kissed those of Madame de Parnes, which had not caused her to tremble, seized, without a thought, those of the widow. She looked up with a stupefied air, for it was the first time that Valentine had been so familiar with her. But when she saw him bend, and approach his lips to her hand, she rose, allowed him to implant a lingering kiss on her fingers, and said with great sweetness:

"My dear sir, my mother needs me; I am sorry to have to leave you."

With this compliment she left him, without giving him time to stop her and without awaiting an answer. He felt much disturbed, and was afraid he had wounded her; he could not make up his mind to leave, and remained standing, waiting for her return. It was the mother who appeared, and when he saw her, he feared his imprudence was about to cost him dearly; nothing happened: the good woman laughingly came to keep him company while her daughter examined the dress she was to wear at the dance that night. He wanted to wait a little longer, hoping all the time that the pouting lady would forgive him; but the dress seemed to need much care; it was time to go and he was forced to leave without knowing the verdict.

At home, once more, our imbecile did not feel

particularly displeased with his day's work. He went over in his mind all the circumstances of his two visits; like the hunter who has wounded the stag and wonders if it is dead, so the lover calculates his chances and ponders over his fancies. Modesty was never one of Valentine's faults. He began by satisfying himself that the Marquise was his. In fact, there had been neither severity nor resistance on the part of Madame de Parnes. But he reflected that, for this very reason, there could have been only a slight touch of coquetry. There are many beautiful women in the world whose hands one may kiss, in the same way that one may kiss the Pope's foot: it is a benevolent formality; so much the better for those who feel in Paradise. Valentine said to himself that perhaps the prudery of the widow was more promising, in reality, than the *laisser faire* of the Marquise. Madame Delaunay, after all, had not been very firm. She had softly removed her hand, and had gone back to press out her dress. In thinking of this dress, Valentine remembered the little dance: it was that very night and he made up his mind to go.

While walking up and down his room and dressing, he was carried away by his imagination. It was the widow he was about to see; it was of her he dreamed. He saw on the table a little portfolio, ugly enough, which he had won in a raffle. On the cover of this portfolio was a very bad view

in water-color, but fairly well mounted under glass. He cleverly replaced the view with the portrait of Madame de Parnes; I am wrong, I mean with that of Madame Delaunay. This done, he placed the portfolio in his pocket, making up his mind to bring it out at the proper time and to show it to his future mistress. What will she say and what shall I answer, he wondered. Even while repeating some of the ready-made sentences that one learns by heart and that one never uses, it suddenly occurred to him that it would be much simpler to write his proposal and present it to the widow.

So he set to work; four pages were covered. Every one knows how the heart expands during those moments when one tries to express in writing feelings which are often perhaps fleeting; it is sweet, it is dangerous, madame, to say right out that one loves. The first page was somewhat cold and much too legible. The commas were in place, the paragraphs plain, everything was present that points to little love. The second page was beginning to be less correct; the lines crowded each other on the third, and the fourth, it must be confessed, was full of badly spelled words.

How can I explain the strange thoughts of Valentine while sealing his letter? It was to the widow he had written it; it was to her that he spoke of his love, of his kiss of the morning, of his fears and his hopes; at the moment of ad-

dressing it, he noticed, on reading it over, that there were no particular details mentioned, and he could not help laughing at the idea of sending it to Madame de Parnes. Perhaps he had, in his ignorance, a hidden motive, which led him to follow this strange idea. He felt incapable, at the bottom of his heart, of writing a similar letter to the Marquise, and his heart taught him, at the same time, that when he wished, he could write another to Madame Delaunay. He therefore took advantage of the occasion and sent to the mansion in the Chausée d'Antin, the declaration he had written to the widow.

CHAPTER IV

It was at the house of an old lawyer, M. des Andelys, that the little supper was held at which Valentine was to meet Madame Delaunay. He found her, as he had hoped, lovelier and more coquettish than ever. In spite of the chain and the earrings, her toilette was almost simple; a single bow of varicolored ribbon set off her face, and more of the same shade encircled her charming and supple waist. I have told you already that she was quite petite, a brunette, with large eyes; she was also somewhat thin and in that, was unlike Madame de Parnes, whose plumpness showed off a beautiful form enveloped by a snow-white network. To use an expression of the Stu-

dios, which will best express my thoughts, the tout ensemble of Madame Delaunay was *bien fondu,* that is to say, that about her everything blended well: her hair being not too black and her skin not too fair, she looked like a small Creole. Madame de Parnes, on the contrary, might have been painted; her cheeks were of a rosy hue and her eyes appeared all the more brilliant. Nothing could be more beautiful than the heavy black tresses of hair which crowned her bare shoulders. But I see that I am like my hero; I think of the one when I should be speaking of the other; let us not forget that the Marquise was never seen at the lawyer's "At Homes."

When Valentine begged the widow for a quadrille, a dry "I am engaged" was all the answer vouchsafed him. Our madcap, who expected this, pretended not to have heard and answered "Thank you." He then started to walk away, and Madame Delaunay ran after him to let him know that he had made a mistake. "In that case, which quadrille will you let me have?" She reddened, and, not daring to refuse, studied her ball program: "This program confuses me," said she, hesitating; "there are many names that I have not as yet struck out, and which escape my memory." Now was the time to bring forth his portfolio containing the portrait; Valentine did not let the opportunity pass: "Here," said he, "will you not write my name on the first page

of this album? It will render it still more valuable to me."

Madame Delaunay this time recognized herself; she took the portfolio, looked at her portrait, and on the first page wrote the name of Valentine; after which, on returning the album, she said somewhat sadly, "I must speak to you; I have a word or two I wish to say; but I can not dance with you."

She passed into a room close by, where cards were being played, and Valentine followed. She appeared to be extremely embarrassed. "What I am about to ask you will probably strike you as being extremely foolish, and I myself feel that you may have cause to think so. You made me a visit this morning, and you—took me by the hand," she added timidly. "I am neither so childish nor so foolish as to ignore the fact that such a small thing angers no one and signifies nothing. In society, the society to which you belong, it is but a simple act of courtesy; but we were alone, and you neither spoke nor departed; you will agree, or, better, your friendship for me will perhaps make you understand——"

She stopped, partly afraid, partly annoyed at her own efforts. Valentine, which this preamble very much alarmed, waited for her to go on, when a sudden idea occurred to him. He did not reflect at what he was about to do, and giving way to a sudden impulse, he exclaimed:

" Your mother saw us? "

" No," answered the widow, with dignity; " no, monsieur, mother saw nothing." As she said these words, the quadrille began, her partner came for her and she disappeared in the crowd.

As you imagine, Valentine waited impatiently for the dance to finish. This hoped-for moment at length arrived; but Madame Delaunay returned to her place, and, whatever he did to attract her, he could not get a word. She did not even seem to be thinking of what remained to be said, but rather of how she could say it. Valentine was imagining many things, all of which culminated in the thought that she was about to ask him not to visit her again. But such a demand, with such small cause, annoyed him. He found it more than ridiculous and perceived in it either a misplaced severity or a false modesty, quick to make itself seen. " She must be a haughty prude or a coquette," he said to himself. Thus, madame, does one judge of things at the age of twenty-five.

Madame Delaunay understood perfectly the thoughts that were passing through the young man's mind. She had foreseen it; but, when she looked at him, she lost courage. Her intention was not absolutely to forbid Valentine the house; but, although she had little spirit, she was large-hearted, and had clearly seen, in the morning, that it was no question of flirting, but that she

was about to be laid siege to. Women have a certain discernment which warns them of the coming struggle. Most of them expose themselves to this, either because they feel themselves on guard, or, because the danger has a certain pleasure in it for them. Beautiful idlers make, of love, a pastime. They know how to defend themselves, and besides, have, when necessary, something to distract them. But Madame Delaunay was too sedentary, too retiring, too busy with her needle, which left time for dreams, and sometimes was their cause; in a word, she was too poor to allow her hand to be kissed. Not that to-day she thought herself in danger; but what might not happen on the morrow, if Valentine spoke to her of love, and if the day after to-morrow she closed the door in his face, and again, if the day after that she was to regret it? Would her work go on? Would there be in the evening the required number of points? I will explain this to you later on. But, in any case, what would the world say? A woman living almost alone is far more exposed than another. Must she not be more severe? Madame Delaunay told herself that, at the risk of being ridiculous, she must keep Valentine at a distance before her calm became ruffled. So she wanted to speak, but she was only a woman, and he was there; the right of presence is the most powerful right of all, and the most difficult to war with.

During the moments that all these motives, which I have just briefly indicated, were passing through her mind, she rose. Valentine was opposite her and their eyes met; alone, the young man for the last hour had been thinking, and, on his side, read with ease all the thoughts that the large eyes of Madame Delaunay expressed.

His early impatience had given way to sadness. He wondered whether she was really a prude or a coquette; and the more he examined his thoughts, and watched the timid and thoughtful face before him, the more he became filled with a sense of respect. He thought that his foolishness was perhaps greater than he had thought. When Madame Delaunay came to him, he knew what she was going to ask him. He wanted to save her the trouble, but found her too pretty and too agitated, and liked better to hear her talk.

It was not without great pains that she decided to do it and to explain everything. Feminine pride, in this case, was rudely shocked. She had to own that she was sensitive, and not to show it, she had to admit that she had understood everything and at the same time to appear to understand nothing. Finally she had to say she was afraid, the last word a woman will pronounce; and the cause of this fear was so slight! Hardly had she begun, when Madame Delaunay felt that there was only one way for her not to be feeble or prudish, neither a coquette nor ridiculous; it

was to tell the truth. So she spoke, and all her talking might be analyzed in one sentence, "Keep away; I am afraid of loving you."

When she had finished, Valentine looked at her, astonished, hurt, and yet very much pleased. I do not know what conceit came to him; one is usually happy when one's heart is throbbing. He opened his mouth to answer, and a hundred answers were ready; he was intoxicated with emotion and with the presence of this woman who dared to speak to him in this manner. He wanted to tell her he loved her, he wished to promise to obey her wishes, he wanted to swear never to leave her side, he wanted to thank her for his happiness and to talk of the pain she had caused him; in fact, thousands of contradictory ideas, thousands of tormenting and delicious thoughts crossed his mind, and in the midst of all this, he was on the point of crying, despite himself, "But you love me!" During all this, they were dancing a galop in the drawing-room: it was the fashion in 1825; several groups had started and were touring the room; the widow got up, she was still waiting for the young man's answer. A singular temptation came over him, and, seeing the happy throng passing, he exclaimed, "Well, all right, I swear it, you see me now for the last time." While speaking thus, he placed his arm round the waist of Madame Delaunay. His eyes seemed to say: "This time, at any rate, let us be friends, and imi-

tate the others." She silently allowed herself to be guided, and to the sound of the music, they flew off like two birds.

It was late and the drawing-room was almost empty; the card-tables were still in use; but you must understand that the dining-room of the lawyer opened into this room, and was therefore quite deserted. The dancers did not go further; they encircled the table, then returned to the drawing-room. It happened that, when, in their turn, Valentine and Madame Delaunay entered this dining-room not a single couple followed; so they suddenly, and in the midst of the dance, found themselves alone. A rapid backward look convinced Valentine that neither a mirror nor a door could betray him; he pressed the young widow to his heart, and without a word, lightly kissed her bare shoulder.

The least cry on the part of Madame Delaunay would have caused a frightful scandal. Happily for the madcap, his partner showed herself prudent; but she could not, at the same time, show herself to be brave and would have fallen had he not held her. So he supported her, and, reentering the drawing-room, she stopped, leaning on his arm, hardly able to breathe. What would he not have given to be able to count the beats of this trembling heart? But the music was at an end, they had to leave, and whatever he might say to Madame Delaunay, she refused to utter a sound.

CHAPTER V

Our hero made no mistake when he feared that he had counted too soon on the insensibility of the Marquise. He was still dozing, the next morning, when he received a note, couched somewhat as follows:

"Monsieur, I do not know who gave you the right to address me in such terms. If it is not a mistake, it is either the result of a wager or an impertinence. In any case, I return your letter, which can not be addressed to me."

Still full of happy memories, Valentine hardly remembered the declaration that he had sent to Madame de Parnes. He reread the note several times, before clearly understanding it. At first he was ashamed enough, and wondered what answer to make. On getting up and rubbing his eyes, his ideas became more fixed. It seemed to him that this was not the language of an offended lady. Not thus had Madame Delaunay expressed herself.

Once more, he read the returned letter and could find nothing deserving of so much anger; the letter was passionate, perhaps foolish, but sincere and respectful. He threw the note on the table and made up his mind to think no more about it.

Such promises are rarely kept; he would, no doubt, have thought no more of it, if the note, instead of being severe, had been tender or simply polite, for the previous evening had made a deep impression on the young man's heart. But anger is contagious; Valentine began by wiping his razor on the letter of the Marquise; then he tore it up and threw it on the floor, and then burned his own declaration; he then dressed and paced his room, then called for his breakfast and could neither eat nor drink; and, finally, took his hat and rushed off to Madame de Parnes.

He was told she was not at home; wishing to know if this was true, he answered: "Yes, I know," and slowly crossed the yard. The porter was running after him, when he met the lady's maid. He accosted her, led her to one side, and without further preamble, placed a louis in her hand. Madame de Parnes was at home; he arranged with the servant that no one had seen Valentine, and that it was by chance that he had passed. Thereupon he entered, crossed the drawing-room, and found the Marquise alone in her bedroom.

She seemed to him, if the truth be told, to show much less anger than the note. She, nevertheless, you may be sure, reproached him for his conduct, and drily asked him by what chance he entered like this. He answered, quite natur-

ally, that he had found no servant to announce him, and that, in all humility, he had come to ask her most humble pardon for what he had done.

"And what excuse can you make?" asked Madame de Parnes.

The word "mistake" which occurred in the note, suddenly occurred to Valentine; it seemed easy to him to take this for an excuse, and so to tell the truth. So he answered that the insolent letter of which the Marquise complained had not been written for her, and had been brought to her by mistake. To explain such a thing, was not easy, as you may imagine. How can one write both a name and an address by mistake? I can not tell you by what means Madame de Parnes came to believe or pretended to believe what Valentine was telling her. He informed her too, and more truthfully than she thought, that he was in love with a young widow, that this widow by the most curious chance, very much resembled the Marquise, that he saw her often, and had seen her only the night before; in a word, he told her all he could, keeping back only the name and a few details which you will easily guess.

It is not without experience that a lover makes use of such tales to disguise his passion. To tell a woman that one loves another, exactly like her in all ways, is, at best, but a romantic way which

may give the right to speak of love; but I think it is necessary, all the same, that the person on whom these stratagems are employed must admit something: Was it thus the Marquise meant it to be? I know not. Wounded pride, rather than love, had drawn Valentine forward; rather than love, it was flattered pride that had appeased Madame de Parnes; she even began to question him about his widow; she was surprised at the likeness of which he spoke; she was, she said, most curious to see for herself. "What is her age?" she asked; "is she larger or smaller than I? Is she bright? Where does she go? Do I know her?"

All these questions, Valentine answered truly, as far as was advisable. This sincerity on his part, at each word, had the appearance of skilfully veiled flattery. "She is neither larger nor smaller than you; she has, like yourself, that beautiful figure; like you, those fine eyes full of fire." The conversation, on taking this course, in no way displeased the Marquise. While listening to all this, she was secretly admiring herself in the glass. To tell the truth, this little maneuver absolutely disgusted Valentine; he could not understand this semi-virtue or semi-hypocrisy of a woman who was angered by a word or two of truth, yet still listened to it all when veiled. When he saw the eyes the Marquise was making at herself in the mirror, he felt

inclined to tell her everything; the name, the road, the kiss at the dance, and thus to take a complete revenge for the note which she had sent him.

A question of Madame de Parnes softened the young man's temper. She asked him jokingly if he could not, at least, tell her the Christian name of the widow. "She is called Julie," he answered quickly. There was so little hesitation about this answer and so much clearness, that Madame de Parnes was struck by it. "It is a pretty name," said she; and the conversation suddenly ceased.

Then happened something perhaps difficult of explanation, yet possibly easy to understand. As soon as the Marquise seriously thought that this declaration which had shocked her was not really for her, she appeared surprised and almost wounded. Was it because Valentine's frivolity now seemed too great, if he loved another, or that she regretted having shown anger unnecessarily, that she became thoughtful, and strange to relate, at the same time irritated and coquettish? She wished to withdraw the pardon she had granted, and while seeking a quarrel with Valentine, sat down to her toilet; she untied the ribbon that encircled her neck, then did it up again; she seized a comb; her hair seemed to displease her; she rearranged it, moving it from one side to the other; as she was doing this, the comb slipped

from her fingers, and her long black hair fell over her shoulders.

"Shall I ring?" asked Valentine; "do you need your maid?"

"It is not worth while," answered the Marquise, impatiently gathering up her fallen hair and beginning to comb it. "I do not know what my servants are doing; they must all be out, for I had forbidden them to give any one admission this morning."

"In that case," said Valentine, "I have been indiscreet, I will retire."

He took several steps toward the door, and was going out, when the Marquise, whose back was turned, and who had apparently not heard his answer, said to him:

"Give me a box that you will find on the mantelpiece." He obeyed; she took some hairpins from the box and once more did up her hair.

"What about that portrait you made?"

"I do not know where it is," answered Valentine; "but I will find it, and with your permission, will give it to you when I have touched it up."

A servant now entered, bringing a letter needing an answer. The Marquise began to write; Valentine got up and went into the garden. In passing near the pavilion, he noticed that the door was open; the maid he had met on his arrival was dusting the furniture; he entered, anx-

ious to examine this mysterious boudoir which was said to be abandoned. On seeing him, the servant began to laugh with the familiar air of a confidante sharing a secret. She was young and rather pretty. He deliberately drew near her and sat in an armchair.

"Does not your mistress sometimes come here?" he heedlessly asked.

The intriguer seemed to hesitate before answering, and continued arranging things in order; while passing in front of that larger modern divan, of which I have, I believe, spoken, she quietly remarked:

"There is madame's sofa."

"And why does madame say she never comes here?" answered Valentine.

"Monsieur," answered the girl, "it is because, begging your pardon, the old Marquis amused himself in this pavilion. It had a bad name in the neighborhood; when a noise was heard, 'It is the Parnes Pavilion' was the cry; and this is why madame objects to it."

"And what does madame do here?" continued Valentine. In place of an answer, the girl lightly shrugged her shoulders, as if to say, "nothing much."

Valentine looked out of the window to see if the Marquise was still writing. While still talking, he had, by chance, placed his hand in his waistcoat pocket; as luck would have it, at that

moment, he felt in a golden humor; a curious idea occurred to him; he drew forth a new two-louis piece which shone marvelously in the sun, and said to the girl:

"Hide me here."

After what had happened, the girl thought that Valentine stood well with her mistress. To call upon a woman with some show of authority, one must feel sure of being well received, and when, after forcing one's way in, one spends half an hour in her bedroom, the servants know what to think. Still it was a very cold proposition: hiding to surprise people, it was the idea of a lover, not of a paramour; the double louis, however beautiful it might seem, could not combat the fear of being dismissed. But, after all, thought the maid, when one is so much in love, one must be quite near to being more. Who knows? Instead of being dismissed, I may be thanked. Heaving a sigh, she took the double louis and laughingly showed Valentine a huge cupboard, which he entered.

"Wherever are you?" asked the Marquise, who had just come down into the garden.

The maid answered that Valentine had left by the small salon. Madame de Parnes looked from side to side, as if to make sure he was gone: she then entered the pavilion, glanced around, and went away after locking the door behind her.

You may perhaps think, madame, that I am

telling you a somewhat impossible tale. I know people with spirit, in this century, who would gravely maintain that such things could not be, and that, since the Revolution, one no longer hides in a pavilion. There is but one answer to give these doubters; it is that they have, no doubt, forgotten the time when they were in love.

As soon as Valentine found himself alone, it, quite naturally, occurred to him that he might have to spend a day there. When his curiosity was satisfied, and after he had leisurely taken note of the splendor, the curtains and the brackets, he found himself feeling intensely hungry and close to a basin of sugar and a jug of water. I have mentioned that his morning's note had prevented his eating his breakfast; but just now, he had no motive for not dining. He swallowed two or three pieces of sugar and thought of the old countryman, who was asked if he liked women: "I like a fine girl well enough," answered the man, "but I like a good cutlet better." Valentine thought of the banquets which, according to the maid, this pavilion had witnessed, and looking at the fine round table in the middle of the room, he would willingly have called forth the ghosts of the late Marquis's little suppers. How comfortable one would feel here on a summer's evening, the windows open, the blinds drawn, the candles lighted, and supper served! What happy times were those in which

our ancestors lived, who had only to stamp on the floor for a banquet to appear! Valentine, speaking in this strain, stamped his foot. There was no answer but the echo, and the twanging of the strings of an old harp.

The sound of a key being inserted in the door made him hurriedly return to his cupboard: was it the Marquise or the maid? The latter could release him, or could at least give him a piece of bread. Will you still accuse me of prevarication if I tell you that at this moment he could not tell which of the two he would most prefer to see?

It was the Marquise who now appeared. What was she going to do? His curiosity was so great, that everything else was forgotten. Madame de Parnes came from dinner; she did exactly what Valentine had just been dreaming of; she opened the windows, closed the blinds, and lit two candles. The day was fast waning. She placed on the table a book she held, walked a step or two, humming a tune, and sat down on a sofa.

What is she going to do? repeated Valentine to himself. Despite the maid's opinion, he could not help hoping that he was about to discover something. Who knows, perhaps she expects some one? I shall find myself playing a fine part, if a third party appears. The Marquise opened her book at random, then shut it, and then seemed to reflect. The young man seemed

to imagine she was looking toward the cupboard. He followed all her movements through the half-open door; a strange thought suddenly impressed him; had the maid spoken? Did the Marquise know he was there?

Here was a foolish idea, you will say, and extremely unlikely withal. Why suppose that the Marquise, after the affair of the note, would not have had him turned out, had she known him to be present, or rather, would not have herself turned him out? I begin by assuring you, madame, that I am of the same opinion as yourself; but I must add, to ease my conscience, that under no circumstances do I profess to explain ideas of this sort. There are some people who always suppose that the duty of an historian is to tell his tale and to leave those who are interested to do the thinking, others think the reverse.

All that I can say is that it is plain that Valentine's declaration had displeased the Marquise de Parnes; that it is probable she no longer thought of it; that apparently she thought him gone; that it is still more likely she had dined well, and that she came to have a rest in the pavilion; but it is certain that she began by placing one of her feet upon the sofa, then the other, and that she put her head on a cushion, peacefully closing her eyes; and it seems to me difficult not to believe, after all this, that she slept.

Valentine had a strange desire, as Valmont says, to pass for a dream. He opened the door of the cupboard; its squeaking made him tremble; the Marquise had opened her eyes, lifted her head, and looked all around. As you may imagine, Valentine did not move. Hearing nothing and having seen nothing, Madame de Parnes once more went to sleep. The young man came forward on tiptoe, his heart throbbing, hardly daring to breathe, and like Robert the Devil, reached the side of his sleeping Isabelle.

Under such circumstances, one is not given to much thinking. Madame de Parnes had never appeared so beautiful; her half-open lips seemed of a more brilliant vermilion, her cheeks rosier than usual; breathing peacefully, her bosom softly rose and fell. The goddess of night, cut from a block of Carrara marble by the chisel of Michelangelo, was not more beautiful than she. To be sure, such a woman surprised in this manner should pardon the desire she inspires, even if she be offended. But a slight movement of the Marquise caused Valentine to stop. Was she asleep? This strange doubt was troubling him still. What matter, said he to himself; is it then a trap? What a whim and what folly! Why should love lose its charm when found to be shared? What is more permissible, or more truthful, than a half-lie which lets itself be

found out? What more beautiful than she, if asleep? What more charming, if she be awake?

While whispering thus, he kept quiet, and could not help thinking of some way of finding out the truth. Guided by this thought, he took a small piece of sugar remaining from his meal, and hiding behind the Marquise, he dropped it on her hand; she did not even move. He pushed a chair, softly at first, then a little harder, but it had no effect. He stretched out his arm, caused the book, that Madame de Parnes had placed on the table, to fall to the floor. He thought her awakened this time and hid behind the sofa, but nothing stirred. So he rose, and as the half-open blind exposed the Marquise to the dampness of the night, he cautiously closed it.

You must understand, madame, that I was not in the pavilion, and from the moment the shutter was closed, it was impossible for me to see more.

CHAPTER VI

Hardly two weeks later, Valentine, on leaving Madame Delaunay left his handkerchief behind in an armchair. When the young man had gone, Madame Delaunay picked up the handkerchief, and having by chance looked at the marks on it, she found an I and a P very deli-

cately embroidered. It was not Valentine's. To whom then did it belong? The name of Isabelle de Parnes had never been mentioned in the Rue du Plat-d'Etain, and the widow consequently was lost in vain efforts to solve the mystery. She turned the handkerchief in all directions, looked at one corner, then at another, as if she expected to find somewhere the real name of the owner.

And why, you will ask, so much curiosity about such a simple matter? One may lend a handkerchief to a friend every day, or lose one; that goes without saying. What is there extraordinary in that? Nevertheless Madame Delaunay closely examined the fine cambric, and finding it feminine looking, shook her head. She understood embroidery, and the design appeared too rich to come from the wardrobe of a young man. An unlooked for sign showed her the truth. From the folds of the handkerchief she understood a corner had been used as a purse, and this way of keeping one's money is only made use of by ladies, as you know. This discovery caused her to grow pale, and after having fixedly regarded the handkerchief for some time, she was obliged to make use of it to wipe away a tear which was trickling down her cheek.

A tear, you will say, a tear already! Alas, yes, madame, she was crying. What then had happened? I will tell you. But for this we must retrace our steps somewhat. You must know

that, the second day after the dance, Valentine had called on Madame Delaunay. Her mother opened the door, and answered that her daughter was out. Madame Delaunay, after this, had written a long letter to the young man; she recalled to his memory their last meeting, and begged him not to come and see her again. She counted on his word, his honor and his friendship. She did not show herself offended, and did not speak of the dance. Briefly, Valentine read this letter from end to end without finding in it either too much or too little. He felt touched, and would have obeyed, if the last word had not been there. This last word had, it is true, been effaced, but so lightly that one only saw it the better. "Good-by," wrote the widow in finishing her letter, "be happy."

What do you think, madame, of saying "Be happy" to a love whom one is banishing? Is is not equivalent to saying, "I am unhappy?" When Friday came Valentine hesitated for a long time whether he should go to the lawyer's or not. Despite his youth and his foolishness, the idea of being offensive to whoever it might be, was insupportable. He did not know how to decide when he repeated, "Be happy." And he rushed off to M. des Andelys.

Why was Madame Delaunay there? When our hero entered the room, he saw her frown with a peculiar expression. As far as manners

go, she was somewhat of a coquette; but, at the bottom of her heart, no one was more simple, more inexperienced than Madame Delaunay. She had been able, when she saw her danger, to bravely try to defend herself; but she had not the necessary weapons for fighting such a battle. She knew nothing of those artful maneuvers, of those ever-ready resources with which women of spirit can keep love in check and in turn repel or attract it. When Valentine had kissed her hand, she had said to herself: "Here is a rascal whom I could well love; he must go at once." But when she saw him, at the lawyer's, enter gaily with his tie in good order, a smile on his lips, and saluting her in spite of her request, with gracious respect, she said to herself: "Here is a man more obstinate and artful than I; I shall not be the stronger of the two, and since he is back again, perhaps he loves me."

This time she did not refuse him the dance he asked for; at her first words, he noticed a great resignation and a great uneasiness. At the bottom of a timid and truthful soul, there was a certain weariness of life; while desiring rest, she was tired of solitude. M. Delaunay, dying quite young, had never loved her; he had married more for a housekeeper than a wife, and, although she had no dowry, he had, in marrying her, made what is known as a sensible marriage. Economy, order, vigilance, public esteem, the friendship of

her husband, in a word, domestic virtues were all she knew of in the world.

In M. des Andelys's house, Valentine had the reputation that any young man, whose tailor is good, can have at a lawyer's. He was spoken of but as a dandy, an habitué of Tortoni's, and the little cousins told each other tales attributed to him. He had come down a baroness's chimney, had jumped out of a duchess's window, on the fifth story, all for love, and without harm, etc., etc.

Madame Delaunay had too much sense to listen to this nonsense; but she would, perhaps, have done better to have done so, rather than listen to a word or two here and there. Everything often depends, here below, on which side of one's nature, is shown to the world. Speaking more scholarly, Valentine had the advantage over Madame Delaunay. She waited for him to ask her pardon, in order to reproach him for coming. He took care not to do this, as you may well think. If he had been, as she thought him to be, a man of wealth, he would perhaps not have succeeded with her, for she would then have felt him too able and too sure of himself; but he trembled when he touched her, and this proof of love, together with a little fear, troubled at the same time both the head and the heart of the young woman. They had no thought in all this for the episode of the dining-room in the law-

yer's house; they seemed both to have forgotten it; but when the signal for the galop was given, and Valentine came to ask the widow to dance, they then had to remember it.

He has assured me that never in his life has he seen a more beautiful face than that of Madame Delaunay when he came and asked for that dance. Her forehead and her cheeks were suffused with blushes; all the blood in her heart seemed to surge round her great black eyes, as if to force out the passion in them. She half rose, ready to accept, yet not daring to; a slight shudder caused her shoulders, not bare this time, to tremble. Valentine held her hand; he pressed it softly in his own, as if to say, "Do not fear anything, I feel that you love me."

Have you ever thought of the position of a woman who pardons a kiss that has been stolen from her? At the moment when she promised to forget it, it was just as if she accepted it. Valentine dared to somewhat reproach Madame Delaunay for her anger; he complained of her severity, of the way in which she had held him at arm's length; finally, not without hesitation, he mentioned a little garden behind his house, in a secluded spot, heavily shaded, where no indiscreet eye could penetrate. A fresh waterfall, softly murmuring, protected their conversation; solitude protected love. No noise, no sign, no danger. Talking of such a place, in the midst of

a crowd, to the sound of music, in the turmoil of a dance, to a young woman who listens, and neither accepts nor refuses, but who allows you to proceed, and smiles—ah! madame, to speak thus of such a place, is perhaps better than to be there.

While Valentine was unreservedly talking, the widow listened without reflecting. From time to time, she offered a timid objection to his ardent wishes; from time to time, she pretended no longer to be listening, and if a word had escaped her, she made him repeat it. Her hand, pressed by that of the young man, wished to be cold and still; it was restless and burning. Chance, which favors lovers, so willed it that, in passing through the dining-room, they found each other alone once more, as on the last occasion. Valentine did not even think of troubling the thoughts of his partner, and, instead of desire, Madame Delaunay saw love. What can I say? This respect, this daring, this room, this dance, this occasion, all joined in bewitching her. She half closed her eyes, sighed, and promised nothing. That, madame, is the reason that Madame Delaunay began to cry when she found the Marquise's handkerchief.

CHAPTER VII

ALTHOUGH Valentine had forgotten this handkerchief, you must not think he was without one.

While Madame Delaunay was weeping, our rascal, totally unaware of this, was far from crying, himself. He was in a little paneled room, gilded and scented like a bonbonnière, in the depths of a great armchair of violet damask. Having well dined, he was listening to "*L'Invitation à la valse de Weber,*" and while sipping some excellent coffee, from time to time he looked at the white neck of Madame de Parnes. Well-dressed and excited, as Hoffmann says, by a well-sweetened cup of tea, she was using her fine hands to advantage. It was not ordinary music, and I must say, in justice, that she played perfectly. I do not know which deserved most praise; the sentimental German master or the intelligent musician or the admirable Erard piano, which gave out, in sonorous tones, the double inspiration it received.

The piece being finished, Valentine rose, and taking a handkerchief from his pocket said, "I thank you; here is the handkerchief you loaned me."

The Marquise did just what Madame Delaunay had done. She immediately looked for the

mark; her sensitive hand had felt a substance too coarse to be hers. She also understood needlework; but this was worked very little, yet enough to denote a woman. She turned the handkerchief about two or three times, lifted it carefully to her nose, looked at it once more, then threw it to Valentine, saying: "You are mistaken: what you are now giving me belongs to one of your mother's maids."

Valentine, who had by mistake taken away the handkerchief of Madame Delaunay, recognized it and felt his heart beat rapidly. "Why to one of the maids?" he asked. But the Marquise was at the piano again; little did she worry over a rival who made use of such coarse linen. She took up the *presto* of her waltz, and pretended not to have heard.

This indifference nettled Valentine. He walked round the room and took up his hat.

"Where are you going?" demanded Madame de Parnes.

"Back to my mother's, to return to the maid the handkerchief she loaned me."

"Shall I see you to-morrow? We are having some music and I should be pleased to see you at dinner."

"No; I shall be busy all day."

He continued to walk up and down and could not make up his mind to leave. The Marquise rose and came to him.

"You are a peculiar man," said she; "do you want to make me jealous?"

"I? Not at all. Jealousy is a feeling I detest."

"Why, then, are you cross when I find this handkerchief savors of the servants' hall? Is it my fault or yours?"

"It does not worry me at all, I find it quite a simple matter."

So saying, he turned his back. Madame de Parnes came quietly forward, seized the handkerchief of Madame Delaunay, and approaching an open window, threw it into the road.

"What are you doing?" cried Valentine. He rushed to stop her; but he was too late.

"I want to find out," laughingly said the Marquise, "how much you value it, and I am curious to see if you will go and look for it."

Valentine hesitated a moment, and reddened in spite of himself. He would have liked to punish the Marquise by some stinging answer, but, as often happens, anger removed the power. Madame de Parnes laughed still more. He slapped on his hat and went out saying, "I am going out to find it."

Accordingly, he hunted long; but a lost handkerchief is quickly picked up, and it was in vain that he went ten times from one point to another. The Marquise still stood at the window, laughing at his efforts. Tired, and somewhat

ashamed, he went off at last, without lifting his eyes, pretending not to see that she had been watching him. At the corner, nevertheless, he looked back and saw Madame de Parnes, no longer laughing, but following him with her eyes.

He continued on his way, heedless of the direction he took, and found himself mechanically going toward the Rue du Plat-d'Etain. It was a fine evening and the sky was clear. And the widow was at her window; the day had been a miserable one for her.

"I want to be reassured," said she, as soon as he entered. "To whom does a handkerchief, which you left here, belong?"

There are people who know how to deceive, without knowing how to tell a falsehood. At this question Valentine was too openly confused for it to be possible to mistake him, and without waiting for him to answer:

"Listen," said Madame Delaunay. "You know now that I love you. You know many people, and I see no one; it is as impossible for me to know what you do, as it is easy for you to see into the least of my actions, if you so choose. You can easily deceive me undetected, since I can neither watch you nor stop loving you; remember, I beg of you, what I am about to tell you: all comes out sooner or later, and, believe me, it is a sad thing."

Valentine wished to interrupt her. She took his hand and continued:

"I do not say it strongly enough; it is not only sad, but the saddest thing there is in the world. If there is nothing sweeter than the remembrance of happiness, nothing is worse than to perceive that the past happiness was a lie. Have you never thought of what it can be to hate those one has loved? Can you conceive anything worse? Those who find pleasure in deceiving others generally pride themselves on it; from this they imagine themselves somewhat better than their dupes; that is very fleeting and to what does it lead? Nothing is simpler than evil. A man of your age can deceive his mistress, just to pass the time away; but the time passes, you may be sure; truth appears, and what remains? A poor abused creature thought herself loved and happy; she made of you her God; think of what may happen if by chance you become hateful to her!"

The simplicity of this language had stirred Valentine to the depths of his soul.

"I love you," he said; "do not doubt it. I love only you."

"I need to believe it," answered the widow, "and, if you speak truly, we will never speak again of my sufferings of to-day. Let me add still another word or two, which I absolutely must tell you. I have seen my father, at the age of six-

ty, suddenly learn that a friend of his childhood had deceived him in business. A letter had come to light in which this friend himself told of his perfidy, and boasted of the unhappy ease with which he had made a certain sum of money to our detriment. I saw my father crushed in spirit and stupefied reading that letter, his head bowed; he was as ashamed of it as if he himself had been the guilty one; he wiped away a tear from his cheek, threw the letter in the fire and cried, 'What small things are vanity and interest! But how awful it is to lose a friend!' If you had been there, Valentine, you would have sworn to yourself never to deceive any one."

Madame Delaunay, while saying this, allowed a few tears to fall. Valentine was seated near her, and for his only answer he drew her to him. She placed her head on his shoulder, and taking the handkerchief from the pocket of her apron, said:

"It is very fine; the embroidery is good: you will let me keep it, will you not? The woman to whom it belongs will not perceive her loss. When one has such a handkerchief, one must have many more. I myself have but a dozen, and they are nothing wonderful. You will return the one you took away from me, and which would do you no credit. But I shall keep this one."

"What for?" answered Valentine. "You will not use it."

"Yes, my friend; I must console myself for having found it on this armchair, and it must wipe away my tears till they cease to flow."

"Let this kiss wipe them away!" cried the young man. And taking the handkerchief of Madame de Parnes, he threw it out of the window.

CHAPTER VIII

Six weeks had passed, and it must be very difficult for a man to know himself, for Valentine did not yet know which of his two mistresses he loved the better. In spite of his moments of sincerity, and the beating of his heart which drew him toward Madame Delaunay, he could not make up his mind to keep away from the direction of the Chausée d'Antin. In spite of the beauty of Madame de Parnes, her spirit, her grace and all the pleasure he found with her, he could not keep away from the little room in the Rue du Plat-d'Etain. Valentine's little garden, in turn, saw both the widow and the Marquise on the young man's arm, and the murmur of the cascade drowned with its monotonous noise sweet nothings always repeated, always expressed with the same ardor. Must one, then, think that inconstancy has its pleasures as well as constancy? One could sometimes hear the wheels of the car-

riage without livery, which brought Madame de Parnes, while Madame Delaunay, veiled, could still be seen at the end of the road, walking timidly away. Hidden behind the lattice, Valentine smiled at these meetings, and remorselessly gave himself up to the dangerous attractions of the change of events.

It is an almost infallible saying that those who are familiar with any danger finish by liking it. Always open to having his double intrigue by chance discovered, forced to the difficult rôle of a man who must incessantly lie without ever betraying himself, our rash fellow was proud of the strange situation in which he found himself. After having accustomed his heart to it, he trained his vanity to it. The fears that troubled him at first, the scruples that stopped him, became dear to him; he gave two similar rings to his two friends; he had persuaded Madame Delaunay to wear a light chain of gold that he had chosen in place of her chain of pinchbeck. It was pleasant to him to make the Marquise wear this. He succeeded in making her put it on one day when she was going to a dance, and this was certainly the greatest proof of love that she had yet given him.

Madame Delaunay, deceived by love, could not believe that Valentine was inconstant. Some days the truth would appear to her clearly and incontestibly. She would then be full of reproaches,

would burst into tears and wish herself dead. A word from her lover would once more assuage her fears, one pressure of his hand would console her, she would go home happy and peaceful. Madame de Parnes, deceived by pride, did not attempt to make any discoveries, nor did she wish to know anything. She said, "It is some old mistress that he has not the courage to leave." And she disdained to humble herself to ask for a sacrifice on his part. Love to her seemed a pastime; jealousy, ridiculous. Besides, she believed her beauty to be a talisman that nothing could resist.

If you will remember, madame, the character of our hero, such as I attempted to paint it in the first page of this story, you will understand and, perhaps, excuse his conduct, although it was no doubt justly to be blamed. The double love that he felt, or believed that he felt, was, so to speak, the reflection of his whole life. Having always looked for extremes, at the same time tasting of the pleasures of the rich and the poor, he found in these two women the contrast which so pleased him, and he was truly poor and rich on the same day. If, between seven and eight in the evening the sun being down, a pair of beautiful gray horses trotted down the Avenue des Champs-Élysées, softly drawing a carriage lined with silk like a boudoir, you might have seen at the back of the carriage a fresh and coquettish figure hidden un-

der a large hat, and smiling at a young man sitting nonchalantly near her: it was Valentine and Madame de Parnes, who were airing themselves after dinner. If the next day, at sunbreak, chance had led you to the pretty woods of Romainville, you might, under the green verdure of a country inn, have come across two lovers quietly talking or reading La Fontaine together: it was Valentine and Madame Delaunay, who had just been walking in the dew. Were you present on the night of a great ball at the Austrian Embassy? Did you notice in the midst of a circle of brilliant young women a beauty prouder than the rest, more courted, more disdainful? That lovely head, crowned with a golden turban, which is gracefully balanced like a rose nursed by the breeze, is the young Marquise, whom all the crowd admires, whom triumph makes still more beautiful, and who still seems to be dreaming. Not far away, leaning against a pillar, Valentine is watching her: no one knows their secret, no one interprets that glance, nor guesses the lover's joy. The brilliancy of the lights, the sound of the music, the murmur of the throng, the scent of the flowers, carry him away, and the radiant image of his beautiful mistress is intoxicating to his dazzled gaze. He can hardly believe his happiness and that such a rare treasure belongs to him. He hears the men around him saying, What brilliancy! What a smile! What a wom-

an!" and he repeats all this to himself. The hour of supper arrives. A young officer blushes with pleasure on giving his arm to the Marquise. She is surrounded, followed: every one wishes to be near her and solicits the favor of a word from those lips. It is then that she passes near Valentine and whispers in his ear: "To-morrow." What joy in such a word! But to-morrow, however, at nightfall, the young man gropes his way up a dark staircase. With great difficulty he reaches the third floor, and knocks softly on a small door; it opens and he enters. Madame Delaunay is alone, working at her table, while waiting for him; he sits down near her; she looks at him, takes his hand and thanks him for still loving her. A single lamp modestly illumines the little room, but under the lamp is a friendly face, happy and kind. There are no longer earnest attentions, nor admiration, nor triumph: but Valentine does more than fail to regret the world, he forgets it. The old mother appears, seats herself in her rocker and he must needs listen, till ten o'clock, to stories of times gone by, caressing her snappy little dog and relighting the lamp when it goes out. Sometimes it is a new novel he has to read: Valentine lets the book fall so as to press against his mistress's little foot while picking it up. Sometimes he must play with the old lady, at two sous a point, and be careful not to play too strong a

game. Coming away, the young man walks. Yesterday he had a champagne supper, humming a quadrille; to-night he sups on a cup of milk, writing a few verses for his friend. Meanwhile the Marquise is furious that he did not keep his word. A great powdered flunkey brings a note full of tender reproaches and scented with musk; the note is opened, the window open, the weather fine, Madame de Parnes is coming; here is our reckless fellow a great lord once more. Thus, always differing from himself, he found means to be truthful, while not sincere, and the lover of the Marquise was not that of the widow.

"And why make a choice?" said he one day out walking with me and attempting to justify himself. "Why this necessity of loving in an exclusive manner? Could you blame a man of my age for being in love with Madame de Parnes? Is she not admired and envied? Are not her spirits and her charms praised far and near? Reason, even, is impassioned. On the other hand, what reproach could one make to him whom the goodness, the tenderness, the candor of Madame Delaunay had touched? Is she not worthy of causing the joy and the happiness of a man? Less pretty, could she not none the less be a precious friend, and such as she is, could there be in this world a more charming mistress! How am I to be blamed for loving these women, since each deserves to be loved? And, if it is true that I am fortunate

enough to count for something in their lives, why should I make one happy by causing misery to the other? Why should the soft smile that my presence sometimes brings to the beautiful widow's lips be bought at the cost of one of the Marquise's tears? Is it their fault if luck has put me in their path, if I have approached them, if they have allowed me to love them? Which shall I choose without being unjust? How has the one any more than the other deserved to be either preferred or forsaken? When Madame Delaunay told me that her entire existence belonged to me, what would you have had me answer? Must I repel her, disabuse her and leave her discouragement and grief? When Madame de Parnes is at the piano and, seated behind her, I see her give herself up to the noble inspiration of her heart; when her spirit exalts mine, elates me, and by sympathy makes me taste of the most exquisite pleasures of intelligence, must I tell her she is mistaken and that such a sweet pleasure is wrong? Must I change into hate or contempt the remembrance of those delicious hours? No, my friend, I should lie if I told one of them I no longer loved her, or that I never loved her; rather would I have the courage to lose them both than choose between them."

You see, madame, that he acted as all men act: not being able to curb his folly, he attempted to give it the appearance of truth. But

there were certain days when his heart, in spite of himself, refused this double rôle accorded to it. He tried to trouble the repose of Madame Delaunay as little as possible, but the pride of the Marquise had more than one caprice to bear. "That woman is all spirit and pride," he told me once. So it happened, that, leaving the salon of Madame de Parnes, the naïveté of the widow made him smile, and he found that she, in her turn, had not enough spirit or pride. He complained of the loss of his liberty. At times a whim would make him miss an appointment. He would take a book and go and dine alone in the country. At other times he cursed the luck that denied him a much desired meeting. At the bottom of his heart, Madame Delaunay was the one he preferred, but he was himself unaware of it, and this singular uncertainty would perhaps have lasted longer, if an event, apparently trivial, had not suddenly enlightened him as to his true feelings.

It was in the month of June, and the evenings in the garden were delicious. The Marquise, sitting one day on a wooden seat near the fountain, complained of its hardness.

"I will make you a present of a cushion," she said to Valentine.

Sure enough, the next morning, there appeared an elegant sofa and a beautiful tapestry cushion, the gifts of Madame de Parnes.

You may perhaps remember that Madame

Delaunay made tapestry. For a month Valentine had seen her constantly at work on something of this kind, the pattern of which he had admired. Not that this pattern had anything remarkable about it. It was, I believe, a crown of flowers, like most of the fashionable tapestry; but the colors were charming. What can a loved hand make that we do not think a masterpiece! A hundred times, at night, near the lamp, the young man had followed with his eyes the widow's clever fingers on the canvas; a hundred times, in the midst of loving words, he had stopped, kept religiously silent, while she counted her stitches; a hundred times he had stopped those tired hands and had given her new courage with a kiss.

When Valentine had the Marquise's sofa placed in a little room opening on the garden, he went down and examined his gift. On closely examining the cushion, he thought he recognized it; he took it up, turned it over, replaced it, and asked himself where had he seen it. "Idiot that I am," said he, "all cushions are alike, and this one has nothing extraordinary about it." But a small stain on the white background suddenly drew his attention. He could not be mistaken. Valentine had himself made that stain, letting a drop of ink fall on the work of Madame Delaunay one night when he was writing near her.

This discovery, as you may think, greatly astonished him. "How can it be possible?" he

asked himself. "How came the Marquise to send me a cushion made by Madame Delaunay?" He examined it again: no more doubt, the flowers were the same, the colors also. He recognized its brilliancy, the whole arrangement; he touched it as if to assure himself that he was not mistaken; then he remained stupefied, not knowing how to explain what he saw.

I can but tell you that a thousand possibilities, each less reasonable than the last, occurred to him. At one time, he thought that chance might have caused the widow and the Marquise to meet, that they had come to some understanding, and that they had jointly sent him this cushion, to inform him that his perfidy was discovered; again he said to himself that Madame Delaunay had overheard his conversation in the garden, the night before, and that she had wished to shame him by herself fulfilling the promise of Madame de Parnes. In any case, he saw himself unmasked, abandoned by his two mistresses, or at any rate by one of them. After having spent an hour in dreaming, he resolved to discover the truth. He called on Madame Delaunay, who received him as usual, and whose face expressed only a slight astonishment at his arrival so early in the morning.

Reassured at first by this reception, he talked for some time on every-day topics; then, dominated by uneasiness, he asked the widow if her tapestry was finished. "Yes," she answered.

" And where is it? " he demanded. At this question Madame Delaunay was troubled and blushed. " It is at the merchant's," she answered quickly. Then she repented and added, " I gave it to him to mount; I shall get it back."

If Valentine had been surprised to recognize the cushion, he was still more puzzled to find the widow so upset when he mentioned it. Yet, not daring to ask any further questions, afraid that he might betray himself, he left at once, and rushed off to the Marquise. But from this visit he discovered still less. When he mentioned the sofa, Madame de Parnes, for all answer, smilingly nodded as if to say, " I am delighted that you are pleased."

So our hero went home again, less anxious, it is true, than when he went out, but thinking that he had been near dreaming. What enigma or what whim of fate did this mystery hide? One makes a cushion, and the other gives it to me; the one spends a month in working, and when that work is done, the other appears to be the owner; these two women have never met, and yet they seem to be in unison to play me a joke, of which they do not seem aware. There was surely enough to make him wonder: and the young man looked for the key to the enigma in a hundred different ways.

On examining the cushion, he found the address of the man who had sold it. On a small

piece of paper pasted on a corner, he read, "*Au Père de Famille, rue Dauphine.*"

Hardly had Valentine read these words, than he saw that he could now find out the truth. He ran to the store "*Au Père de Famille*"; he asked if they had not that very morning sold to a lady a tapestry cushion which he described and which was remembered. Questions he afterward made as to who had made this cushion, and whence it came, were answered but shortly; they did not know the maker: there were many articles of this kind in the store; in fact, they would admit nothing.

Despite their reticence, Valentine soon discovered from the answers of the youth he questioned, a mystery of which he had no idea, and of which many besides himself were ignorant. It was that there were in Paris a large number of women, poor girls, who, while having a good and sometimes distinguished position in the world, still worked in secret for their living. The merchants, in this manner, and at a small figure, employed clever workpeople; many a family, living quietly, but with whom one takes tea, sustains itself by the work of the daughters of the house; one sees them ceaselessly with a needle, but they are not wealthy enough to wear what they make; when they have embroidered a frieze-point they sell it to buy muslin. The one, the daughter of an ancient family, proud of her title and her birth, marks handker-

chiefs. Another, whom you admire at the dance, so full of fun, so coquettish, so light-hearted, makes artificial flowers and with her work pays for her mother's food. Yet another, rather better off, works to increase her toilet; her trimmed hats, her worked scent-bags, which can be seen on the shelves of the stores, and which she sells for want of other occupation, are the secret and sometimes pious work of an unknown hand. Few men would resort to this, and would remain poor from pride instead; few women refuse to do this, when they have need for it, and of those who do it, not one is ashamed. It happens that a young woman meets a friend of her childhood who is poor and needs some money; as she can not lend it to her, herself, she tells her what to do, encourages her, gives her an instance, takes her to the merchant, who builds up a small business for her. Three months after, the friend is in comfortable circumstances and gives to another the same help and advice. This kind of thing happens every day; no one knows anything about it, and all for the better; for the chatterers, who are ashamed of work, would soon find means to dishonor what is most honorable in this world.

"About how long," asked Valentine, "would it take to make a cushion similar to the one I am speaking of, and what would the maker get for it?"

"Monsieur," answered the boy, "to make a

cushion like that, it would take two months, or perhaps only six weeks. The maker buys her wool, naturally; so that it is so much the less for her. English wool, of good quality, costs ten francs per pound; the poppy colored and cerise cost fifteen francs. For this cushion, you would require a pound and a half of wool at the most, and to a clever person it would bring in about forty or fifty francs."

CHAPTER IX

When Valentine, home once more, found himself confronting his sofa, the secret he had just found out produced an unexpected effect. On reflecting that Madame Delaunay had spent six weeks in making this cushion, only to gain two louis, and that Madame de Parnes had bought it while out for a walk, he experienced a strange heart-burning. The difference that chance had effected in these two women was, at this moment, so palpable to him, that he could not help suffering. The idea that the Marquise was about to arrive, would sit on this sofa, and would place her bare arms where the widow's tears had fallen, was insupportable to the young man. He took the cushion and placed it in a cupboard. "Let her think what she likes," he said to himself, "I have taken pity on this cushion, and I can not leave it there."

Madame de Parnes arrived soon after, and was surprised not to see her cushion. Instead of making an excuse, Valentine answered that he did not want it, and that he would never use it. He said this in a curt manner and without thinking of what he was doing.

"And why?" asked the Marquise.

"Because I do not care for it."

"In what way does it displease you? You told me just the opposite this very morning."

"That is quite possible; but now I do not like it. How much did it cost you?"

"There's a nice question!" said Madame de Parnes; "whatever are you thinking of?"

You must know that a few days since, Valentine had learned, from the mother of Madame Delaunay, that she was in an awkward position. It was a question of paying a quarter's rent to an avaricious owner who, at the least delay, used threats. Valentine, being unable to offer his services, which would not have been accepted, even for a mere nothing, could only hide his anxiety. After what the boy had said at the "*Père de Famille*," it was probable that the cushion had not been sufficient to clear the widow. It was not the fault of the Marquise; but human nature is sometimes so peculiar, that the young man almost wanted the moderate cost of her purchase from the Marquise, and, without noticing the unconventionality of the question:

"That cost you forty or fifty francs," said he, bitterly. "Do you know how long it took to make?"

"Yes, I know, especially as I made it myself," answered the Marquise.

"You!"

"Yes, I, and for you I worked at it a fortnight; do you not think you owe me some thanks?"

"Two weeks, madame? But it takes two months, and two months of steady application, to finish such a work. You would take six months to finish it, if you undertook to do it."

"You seem to be very up-to-date; where do you get so much knowledge?"

"From a worker I know, and who certainly is not at fault."

"Well! this worker did not tell you all. You do not know that for these things the most important part is the flowers, and that you can buy, at the stores, prepared canvases in which the background is filled in; the most difficult part remains to be done, but the longest and most tiresome is done. That is how I bought this cushion, which did not even cost me forty or fifty francs, for this background is nothing; it is merely mechanical, for which all that is necessary is wool and hands."

The word "mechanical" had not pleased Valentine.

" I am very sorry," he answered, " but neither the background nor the flowers are yours."

" And whose then? Apparently the worker's, whom you know?"

" Perhaps."

The Marquise seemed to hesitate for a second between anger and the desire to laugh. She took the latter course, and, giving way to her hilarity:

" Tell me then," she cried, " tell me then, I beg you, the name of your mysterious worker, who gives you such good lessons."

" She is called Julie," answered the young man. His looks and the tone of his voice suddenly recalled to Madame de Parnes that he had mentioned the same name the day he had spoken of the widow with whom he was in love. Then, as the truthful manner in which he had answered worried the Marquise, she vaguely remembered the story of this widow, which she had taken to be an excuse; but, repeated in this way, the name appeared to her to be serious.

" If you are telling me a secret," said she, " it is not very smart of you nor polite."

Valentine answered nothing. He felt that his first movement had taken him too far, and he began to reflect. The Marquise, on her side, remained silent some time. She awaited an explanation, and Valentine was thinking of the means to evade this. He was at last about to speak,

perhaps to try and take back what he had said, when the Marquise, losing patience, bruskly rose.

"Is it a quarrel or a rupture?" she demanded, in such a violent manner that Valentine could not master himself.

"As you wish," he answered.

"Very well," said the Marquise, and she went away. But, five minutes later, the bell rang. Valentine opened the door and saw Madame de Parnes standing on the mat, her arms crossed, enveloped in her mantle and leaning against the wall. She was frightfully pale, and almost ill. He took her in his arms, carried her to the sofa, and started to appease her. He begged her pardon for his bad temper, prayed her to forget this unhappy scene, and accused himself of one of those bursts of impatience for which it is impossible to give a reason.

"I do not know what is the matter with me this morning," he told her. "Some bad news I received irritated me. I tried to quarrel with you without any motive; never think of what I said to you, but, as said in a moment of folly, on my part."

"Let us not speak of it any more," said the Marquise, herself again, "and go and get my cushion." Valentine unwillingly did as she asked. Madame de Parnes threw the cushion on the ground and placed her feet on it. This action, as you may think, was not pleasant to the

young man; he frowned, in spite of himself, and told himself that after all he had feebly surrendered to a woman's folly.

I do not know if he was right, neither do I know by what childish obstinacy the Marquise had wished, at all costs, to obtain this petty triumph. It is not without example that a woman of spirit is unwilling to yield under such circumstances; but it may happen that it is a bad move on her part, and that the man, after having obeyed, is sorry for complying with her wishes. It is thus that childish playfulness becomes serious when pride takes a part, and that much less than an embroidered cushion has caused a separation before to-day.

While Madame de Parnes, recovering her gracious manner, did not hide her joy, Valentine could not take his eyes off the cushion, which, truth to tell, was not made for use as a footstool. Contrary to her usual custom, the Marquise had come on foot, and the tapestry of the widow, soon pushed to the middle of the rooms, showed its contact with the foot that had trampled on it. Valentine picked up the cushion, brushed it, and placed it on an armchair.

"Are we going to quarrel again?" said the Marquise, smiling. "I thought you were going to let me do as I pleased and that peace was concluded."

"This cushion is white, why dirty it?"

" To make use of it, and, when it is dirty, Miss Julie shall make us some more."

" Listen to me, Madame de Parnes," said Valentine. " You understand, very well, that I am not so foolish as to attach any importance to a whim or a mere nothing of that kind. If it is a fact that my displeasure at your action has some motive of which you are ignorant, do not attempt to discover it; that will be your wisest course. You were not very well just now and I did not ask you if this fainting was very serious. You have obtained what you wanted and do not attempt more."

" But you will perhaps understand," answered Madame de Parnes, " that I am not so foolish as to attach more importance than yourself to this trifle, and, if I choose to insist, you will still further understand that I want to know exactly to what extent it is a trifle."

" So be it, but I would ask you, in answer, if it is pride or love that prompts you? "

" It is both one and the other. You do not know who I am, the freedom of my conduct has given you an opinion of me which I allow you, because you will share it with no one; think, from my point of view, what you please of me and be unfaithful if it suits you, but take care not to offend me."

" It is, perhaps, pride which speaks just now, madame, but remember that it is not love."

"I know nothing about it; if I am not jealous, it is certain that it is from scorn. As I do not recognize any one's right to watch me except M. de Parnes, neither do I pretend to watch any one myself. But how can you dare to twice repeat to me a name which you should be silent about."

"Why should I be silent, when you question me? That name can not cause her to whom it belongs, nor him who pronounced it, to blush."

"All right; stop pronouncing it then."

Valentine hesitated a moment.

"No," he answered, "out of respect for her to whom it belongs, I will not pronounce it."

At these words, the Marquise rose, placed her mantle round her, and in a chilling tone said:

"I think they must have come for me, please escort me to my carriage."

CHAPTER X

The Marquise de Parnes was more than proud, she was haughty. Accustomed since childhood to have all her wishes satisfied, neglected by her husband, spoiled by her aunt, flattered by the people who surrounded her, the only counselor that guided her, in the midst of such dangerous liberty, was that native pride which

triumphed even over passion. She cried bitterly when she returned home; then she ordered that no one be allowed to see her, thought of what she must do, and resolved to suffer no longer.

When Valentine, the following day, went to see Madame Delaunay, he thought he noticed that he was followed. And so he was, and the Marquise soon found out where the widow lived, her name, and the frequent visits that the young man paid her. She did not wish to stop at that, and, however improbable may appear the means she used, it is no less true that she did make use of them and successfully.

At seven in the morning, she rang for her maid, and had brought to her a cloth dress, and apron and a cotton handkerchief and a large bonnet, under which she hid her face as far as possible. Thus disguised, a basket on her arm, she went to the market of *Les Innocents*.

It was the hour at which Madame Delaunay was accustomed to go there, and the Marquise had not long to wait; she knew the widow resembled her, and she soon perceived in front of a fruiterer's a young woman of about her figure, with black eyes and modest looks, buying some cherries. She drew near.

"Have I not the honor of addressing Madame Delaunay?" she asked.

"Yes, mademoiselle, what do you wish?"

The Marquise did not reply, her curiosity was

satisfied, and little she cared if any one was surprised. She cast at her rival a stupefied and curious glance, eyed her from head to foot, then turned and disappeared.

Valentine no longer called on Madame de Parnes. He received from her a printed invitation to a ball, and thought it was his duty to go. When he entered the mansion he was surprised to see but one window lit up; the Marquise was alone and answered him. "Forgive me," she said to him, "the little ruse I made use of to bring you here. I thought you might not answer if I wrote and asked you for a quarter of an hour's conversation, and I want to say a word or two, begging you to answer me sincerely."

Valentine, who by nature was not malicious, and whose anger was gone as soon as it appeared, wished to make the conversation happy, and began to joke with the Marquise about her supposed ball. She cut him short by saying, "I have seen Madame Delaunay."

"Do not be alarmed," she added, seeing Valentine change color; "I saw her without her knowing who I was and in such a way that she could not recognize me. She is pretty, and it is true that she somewhat resembles me. Did you already love her when you sent me a letter written to her?"

Valentine hesitated.

"Speak, speak without fear," said the Mar-

quise. "It is the only way of showing that you have any esteem for me."

She said these words with so much sadness that Valentine was moved by them. He sat down near her, and told her faithfully what was in his heart—"I already loved her," he told her, "and I love her still; it is the truth."

"Nothing more is possible between us," answered the Marquise, rising. She approached a mirror and gave herself a coquettish glance.

"For you," she continued, "I have done the only action of my life in which I have not thought of the consequences. I do not repent it, but I should wish not to be the only one to sometimes remember it."

She took from her finger a gold ring in which was set an aqua-marina.

"Here," she said to Valentine, "wear this for love of me; this stone is like a tear."

When she gave the young man her ring, he wished to kiss her hand.

"Take care," said she; "remember that I have seen your mistress; do not let us forget it too soon."

"Ah!" he answered, "I love her still, but I feel I shall love you always."

"I believe it," answered the Marquise, "and it is perhaps for that reason that I leave to-morrow for Holland, where I go to join my husband."

"I will follow you," cried Valentine, "do not doubt it; if you leave France, I leave it at the same time as you."

"Take care! I should be lost, and you will attempt in vain to see me again."

"I do not care; even if I must follow ten miles behind, I will, at least, prove to you the sincerity of my love, and you will believe in it, in spite of yourself."

"But I have told you I believe it," answered Madame de Parnes with a malicious smile. "So good-by, do not be so foolish."

She held out her hand to Valentine, and half opened the door of her bedroom to retire.

"Do not do that," she added lightly; "or, if you happen to do it, write me a line to Brussels, for from there one can change one's route."

With these words the door was shut, and Valentine, alone, left the house in the greatest distress.

He found it impossible to sleep that night, and the next day, at daybreak, he had as yet not thought of what he should do. A rather sad note from Madame Delaunay, received on awakening, had disturbed without deciding him. At the thought of leaving the widow, his heart was torn; but at the idea of following the daring and alluring Marquise, in a coach, he felt himself tremble with desire. He looked in the distance and listened to the carriages rolling by. The ridiculous

equipages of bygone times recurred to him. What can I say? He was dreaming of Italy, of pleasure, of a little scandal, of Lauzon, disguised as a postilion; on one side, his anxious memory reminded him of the fears so naïvely expressed by Madame Delaunay one night. What awful future was he leaving her? He repeated to himself the words of the widow: "Must I hate you some day?"

He passed the whole day indoors, and after having exhausted all the fantastic projects of his imagination, and all his whims, he asked himself, "What do I want? If I wish to choose between these two women why this uncertainty? If I love them both equally, why have I placed myself, by my own acts, in a position where I must lose one or the other? Am I mad? Have I my reason? Am I perfidious or sincere? Have I too little courage or too much love?"

He sat at his table, and taking the drawing he had made some time before, he attentively regarded this untruthful portrait which resembled his two mistresses. All that had happened during two months passed before his mind, the pavilion and the small room, the muslin dress and the white shoulders, the small dinners and the little breakfasts, the piano and the knitting-needle, the two handkerchiefs, the embroidered cushion, he saw them all again. Each hour of his life gave him different advice. "No," he

said to himself at last, "it is not between two women that I must choose, but between two roads, both of which I have wished to follow at the same time, and which can not lead to the same goal: one is folly and pleasure, the other is love; which should I take? Which leads to happiness?"

I told you at the beginning of this story, that Valentine had a mother whom he loved tenderly. She entered his room while he was still in the midst of these thoughts. "My child," said she, "I found you sad this morning. What is the matter? Can I help you? Do you need some money? If I can not help you, can I not at any rate know your sorrow and try to console you?"

"Thank you," answered Valentine. "I was thinking of traveling, and was wondering which should make one happy, love or pleasure. I had forgotten friendship. I shall not leave my country, and the only woman, to whom I wish to open my heart, is she who can share it with you."

EMMELINE

CHAPTER I

You will remember, no doubt, madame, the marriage of Mademoiselle Duval. Although, like everything else, only the talk of a day in Paris, it was quite an event in a certain circle. If my memory serves me well, it was in 1825. Mademoiselle was leaving the convent, eighteen years old, and with an income of eighty thousand francs a year. M. de Marsan, who married her, had but his title and expectations of some day joining the peerage at the death of his uncle, hopes which the Revolution of July destroyed; beyond all this, he possessed small means and sufficient of the follies of youth. It was said that he went from the third floor of a furnished house to accompany Mademoiselle Duval to Saint-Roch, and returned with her to one of the finest mansions of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. This strange union, lightly made apparently, gave rise to endless rumors, of which not one came near the truth, because not one of them was simple, and for the reason that, at all costs, they had to find some extraordinary cause for such an unusual occur-

rence. A few details, necessary to explain all this, will, at the same time, give you some idea of our heroine.

After having been the most troublesome, studious, sickly, and stubborn child in the world, Emmeline, at the age of fifteen, had developed into a young girl with rosy cheeks, tall, slender, and of independent character. She was wonderfully even-tempered and thoughtless, showing her will only when it was a question of the heart. She was a stranger to all constraint; always alone in her room, she scarce had any rules for her work but her own pleasure. Her mother, who understood and knew how to love her, had insisted on this liberty for her, which was some compensation for the lack of management: for a natural taste for study and earnestness of intelligence are the best masters for a high-born spirit. There was as much seriousness as gaiety in the character of Emmeline; but her age rendered this latter quality more prominent. With a tendency toward thought, she would interrupt the most serious discourse with a joke, and afterward would only look on the funny side of the subject. She could be heard bursting into laughter all alone, and at the convent she once awoke her neighbor in the middle of the night by her noisy cheerfulness.

Her very pliant imagination seemed susceptible to a touch of enthusiasm; she passed the time in drawing or writing; if a tune of which she was

fond occurred to her, she would leave everything at once to go to the piano, and would play her favorite air a hundred times in all the keys; she was discreet and never confiding, she had no overflowing of friendship; a sort of bashfulness fought against any expression of her feelings. She liked to solve the little difficulties which are brought forth in this world at each step, herself; in this way she found strange pleasures, of which, to be sure, the people about her never dreamed. But her curiosity had always, as a limit, a certain respect for herself; here is one instance among many:

She studied all day in a room where there was a great bookcase with glass doors, holding about three thousand volumes. The key was in the lock, but Emmeline had promised not to touch it. She always kept that promise scrupulously, and there was, in that, much that was praiseworthy, for she had a longing to learn everything. She was not forbidden to devour the books with her eyes; and she knew all the titles by heart; she ran her eye along the shelves one after the other, and to reach the highest, placed a chair on the table; with her eyes shut she could have put her hand on any particular book. She liked the authors according to the titles of their works, and, in this way, she made some terrible mistakes. But it is not of this we are speaking.

In this room, there was a small table close to a

large window which overlooked a somewhat dismal court. An exclamation of a friend of her mother opened Emmeline's eyes as to the darkness of her room. She had never felt the effect of outside influence on her spirits. Those who attach importance to what consists of material well-being, were, by her, classed as maniacs. Always bareheaded, her hair in disorder, bidding defiance to wind and sun, never so happy as when she came in soaked by the rain, she gave way, when in the country, to all the most violent exercises, this being her whole existence. Seven or eight leagues on horseback, at full gallop, were a mere detail for her; on foot she defied one and all, she ran, climbed trees, and if one did walk on the pavement instead of on the edge of the quay, if one did not come down stairs on the balustrade, she thought it was out of human respect. Above all, she liked, when at home, to scamper off by herself, to see the country and to be alone. This early taste for solitude, and the pleasure she felt in going out in stormy weather, was, she insisted, because she was then sure that no one would come to look for her when she went out. Always carried away by this strange fancy, by these risks and dangers, she would get into a boat and so leave the park, through which flowed the river, without questioning her destination. How was it they allowed her to run all this risk? I can not undertake to explain it.

With all this folly, Emmeline was a joker; she possessed an uncle, almost round in figure, with a foolish laugh, though a most excellent man. She had persuaded him that in figure and spirits she was just like him, and all this with arguments which would have almost caused the dead to laugh. On this account, her uncle had conceived for his niece an unlimited tenderness. She played with him as with a child, put her arms round his neck as soon as he arrived and climbed on his shoulders; and up to what age? I will not tell you this either. The little frolicsome child's greatest amusement was to make this personage, serious as he was, read aloud. It was difficult for him, as he found books to have no meaning, which was explained by his method of punctuation; he would hesitate in the middle of a sentence, his only guide being the length of his breath. You may say, "What nonsense!" Yet the child laughed heartily. I am forced to add that she did the same at the theater, in the middle of a tragedy, though she was often moved by the most laughable comedies.

Forgive me, madame, these childish details, which, after all, do but describe a spoiled child. You must understand that such a character must later follow her own ideas, and not those of the world.

When sixteen years old, the uncle in question took Emmeline with him to Switzerland. At the

sight of the mountains you might have thought her mad, so transfixed with joy was she. She shouted and jumped out of the carriage. She must needs plunge her face into the small streams that trickled through the rocks. She wished to climb mountains, or descend to the torrents at the foot of precipices; she picked up stones and tore up the moss. Entering a châlet one day, she did not wish to leave; it was almost necessary to use force, and when she was once more in the carriage she burst into tears, calling out to the peasants, "Ah! my friends, will you let me go?"

There was, in her, no trace of coquettishness when she appeared in society. Is it a misfortune to find oneself placed in the world without great maxims? I know not. Besides, does not one often fall into danger in trying to evade it? Witness those poor women to whom have been told such terrible stories of love, that, when they enter a drawing-room, their heart's-strings, excited by fear, resound, like the strings of a harp, at the smallest sigh. As to love, Emmeline as yet was quite ignorant on this subject. She had read a few novels, from which she had picked out one or two, which she termed sentimental nonsense, chapters which she willingly treated in an entertaining manner. She had promised herself to exist solely as a looker-on. Worrying neither about her dress, nor her figure, nor her spirit, if she was to attend a ball, she would

place a flower on her head, caring nothing for the appearance of her hair, would put on a lace gown as if it were a hunting costume, and, without admiring herself in the glass three-fourths of the time, would go away happy.

You may imagine that with her fortune, for during her mother's lifetime her dowry was considerable, she was invited out every day. She never received a single invitation without looking into it; but these consecutive examinations were, for her, but the occasion for a gallery of caricatures. She studied people from head to foot with more confidence than one usually has at her age; then, in the evening, shut in with her best friends, she would give them a representation of the morning's interview; her natural talent for mimicking made this scene most comical. One appeared embarrassed, another foppish; one spoke through his nose, the other greeted her awkwardly. Holding in her hand her uncle's hat, she would enter, sit down, talk of the rain and the fine weather as if making a first call, and little by little began to dip into the matrimonial question, and, suddenly stopping her game, would burst into laughter; a decisive answer that one might give her suitors.

The day arrived, however, when she found herself before her mirror, arranging her flowers with more care than was her custom. She was going that day to a big dinner-party, and her maid had

dressed her in a new gown which did not appear to her to be in good taste. An old opera air with which she had been rocked to sleep, came back to her:

> "When one tries to please one's lover,
> One is almost quite in love."

The use she made of these words suddenly plunged her into a strange emotion. She remained thoughtful all the evening, and for the first time they found her sad.

M. de Marsan had just arrived from Strasburg, where his regiment was on duty. He was one of the finest looking men you could meet, with that proud air and somewhat violent temper which you know of. I am unaware if he was present when the new gown was worn, but he was invited to a hunting-party by Madame Duval, who possessed very fine preserves at Fontainebleau, at which Emmeline was present. Just as she was entering the wood, the sound of the horn caused the horse she was riding to bolt. Accustomed to the whims of the animal, she wished to punish it after having calmed it; a lash of the whip, too heavily applied, nearly cost her her life. The spirited horse started across the fields, and was leading the imprudent rider toward a deep ravine, when M. de Marsan, who had dismounted, ran to stop it. He was knocked down by the horse and his arm broken.

From this day, Emmeline's character appeared to be absolutely changed. Her cheerfulness was succeeded by a strange, absent expression. Madame Duval died shortly after, the country seat was sold, and it was said that, in the mansion of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, Mademoiselle Duval's admiration was stirred when a fine looking fellow passed on horseback each day on the way to the Champs-Élysées. However this may be, a year later Emmeline told her family of her intentions, which nothing could alter. I need not tell you of the worry and trouble and all the effort that was made in trying to convince her. After six months of obstinate resistance, in spite of all they were able to say or do, they had to yield to mademoiselle, and she became Comtesse de Marsan.

CHAPTER II

THE marriage accomplished, her spirits revived. It was a strange sight to see a woman after her marriage becoming a child once more. It seemed as if Emmeline's life had been suspended by her love, and as soon as it was satisfied she went on her way like a stream that is checked for a moment.

It was no longer in the small room that the childish pranks were daily played; it was in the

de Marsan mansion, as also in the most formal drawing-rooms, and you may imagine the effect they produced. The Comte, serious and at times gloomy, embarrassed perhaps by his new position, went sadly with his wife, who laughed at everything while thinking of nothing. At first astonished, the world murmured, then, as usual, took no notice. The reputation of M. de Marsan was not that of a matrimonial man, but was very good as a husband; besides, had he wished to be more severe, there was no one who would have disturbed Emmeline's happy cheerfulness. Uncle Duval had been careful to let it be known that the marriage contract, as regards money, had not placed his niece at the mercy of a master; society was content with this confidence, willingly given, and, as for what had preceded and brought about the marriage, it was spoken of as but a whim out of which the gossips formed a romance.

Nevertheless, one asked oneself what extraordinary virtues had been able to attract a rich heiress, and had caused her, at a single stroke, to suddenly make up her mind. Those whom chance has passed over are not well pleased at the disposal of two millions in this fashion, without any apparent motive. They do not know that if most men cling to money above all, a young woman sometimes may care nothing for it, especially when born rich, and if she has not seen her father amass his wealth. This was Emmeline's case pre-

cisely; she had married M. de Marsan simply because he pleased her, and she had neither father nor mother to oppose her; but, as to the difference in their fortune, she had absolutely not thought of it. M. de Marsan had won her by his fine, manly appearance, his good looks, and strength. He had performed before and for her, the one action that had caused the girl's heart to throb; and, as an everlasting happiness is sometimes found allied with a romantic disposition, this inexperienced heart had exulted. Besides, the silly Comtesse loved her husband to distraction; in her eyes nothing was noble but he, and when she took his arm, nothing on earth would have made her turn her head.

During the first four years after their marriage, they were both but rarely seen. They had rented a country seat on the banks of the Seine and close to Melun. There are in this neighborhood two or three villages called *Le May,* and as the house was apparently built on the site of an old mill, it was named the *Moulin de May.* It was a charming dwelling; from it, one enjoyed a fine view. A large terrace, planted with lime trees, commanded the left bank of the river, and one strolled down a verdant hill from the park to the edge of the water.

Behind the house was a large poultry yard, unusually clean and neat, in the middle of which was a pheasantry. An immense park encircled the

house, forming part of the woods of La Rochette. You know these woods, madame. Do you remember the "Lane of Sighs"? I never knew whence it obtained its name, but I always thought it well chosen. When the sun plays on the narrow border of trees, and when walking there alone in its coolness during the heat of the day, you can see this long gallery extending as you advance, you feel uneasy and delighted to be alone, and lapse into dreams in spite of yourself.

Emmeline was not fond of this lane; she found it sentimental, and her pranks at the convent would come back to her mind when it was mentioned. The courtyard, on the other hand, delighted her; she spent two or three hours there every day with the farmer's children. I am afraid, my heroine will seem foolish in your eyes when I tell you that when one came to see her, she was sometimes found on a haymow with a large pitchfork in her hands and her hair filled with hay; but she would drop to the ground like a bird, and, before you had time to perceive the spoiled child, the Comtesse was near you, and did the honors of the house with a graciousness which pardoned all.

If she was not in the courtyard, to find her, you must needs seek, in the center of the park, a little green hillock in the midst of the rocks; it was a child's true wilderness, such as that of Rousseau's at Ermenonville, three stones and some heather.

Here, seated in the shade, she sang at the top of her voice while reading the " Funeral Orations " of Bossuet or some other equally serious work. If you could not find her even here, she was on horseback in the vineyard, forcing some old farm horse to jump the ditches and fences, and amusing herself all alone with imperturbable sang-froid, at the poor beast's expense. If you found her neither in the vineyard, nor in the wilderness, nor in the courtyard, she was probably seated at her piano absorbed in a new score, with her head forward, her eyes excited, and her hands trembling. The perusal of the music occupied her entirely, and she trembled with the thought that she was about to discover an air or a line to her taste. But if the piano, like the rest, was silent, you might then perceive the mistress of the house seated, or rather crouched, on a cushion in a corner of the fireplace, and stirring up the fire, the poker in her hand. Her vacant eyes were seeking in the veins of the marble figures, animals, scenes, a thousand themes for dreaming, and, lost in this contemplation, she would burn the tip of her slipper with the poker, red hot from the fire.

" What real folly! " you will say. It is not a romance I am telling you, madame, and you will, no doubt, perceive this.

As, despite her follies, she had spirit, it happened that, without noticing it, there gathered around her a wide circle of intelligent people.

M. de Marsan, in 1829, was obliged to go to Germany for an affair of inheritance which, however, brought him nothing. He did not wish to take his wife, and confided her to the Marquise d'Ennery, his aunt, who came and lived at the *Moulin de May*. Madame d'Ennery was of a worldly spirit; she had been beautiful in the grand days of the Empire, and she walked with great dignity, as if she wore a long train. An old spangled fan, which never left her, served to half hide her when she allowed herself to indulge in a broad insinuation, which escaped her at will; but decency was always in reach, and, as soon as the fan was lowered, the eyes of the lady did likewise. Her method of thought and speech, at first, astonished Emmeline to an extent you can not imagine; for, with all her foolhardiness, Madame de Marsan had remained unusually innocent. The jocular stories of her aunt, the manner in which she looked at marriage, those half smiles when speaking of others, those alas! in speaking of herself, all these rendered Emmeline now serious and stupefied, now mad with pleasure, like the telling of a fairy tale.

When the old lady saw the "Lane of Sighs," needless to say she admired it extremely. Her niece came with her out of politeness; it was here, that, through a rain of trifles, Emmeline understood the depth of things, that is to say, in plain English, the Parisian's mode of life.

They were walking alone together one morning, and chatting, reached the woods of La Rochette; Madame d'Ennery vainly endeavored to have her niece tell the story of her love; in a hundred different ways she questioned her as to what had taken place at Paris during that mysterious year when M. de Marsan was courting Mademoiselle Duval. She laughingly asked if there had not been some meetings, a kiss taken with the agreement, in fact, how her passion had begun. On this subject, Emmeline had been dumb all her life. I may possibly be mistaken, but I believe that the cause of this silence was her inability to speak of anything without joking, and that she did not wish to joke about this.

Briefly, the dowager, finding her trouble wasted, changed the subject, and asked if, after four years of marriage, this strange love was still in existence. "As it existed the first day," answered Emmeline, "and as it will continue to my last." Madame d'Ennery, at these words, stopped and majestically kissed her niece on the forehead. "Dear child," said she, "you deserve to be happy, and happiness is sure for the man you love." After this sentence, emphatically spoken, she drew herself up all at once, and added lackadaisically: "I fancied M. de Sorgues was looking at you with longing eyes."

M. de Sorgues was a fashionable young man, a great lover of hunting and horses, who often

visited the *Moulin de May,* more on account of the Comte than his wife. It was true enough, however, that he had flirted with the Comtesse; for what idler, twelve miles from Paris, will not look at a pretty woman when he meets her? Emmeline had hardly ever noticed him, unless to see that he was well entertained when in her house. He was indifferent to her, but her aunt's observation made her secretly hate him. Luck willed it that, on entering the woods, she saw in the court, as it happened, a carriage which she recognized as that of M. de Sorgues. He appeared shortly after, tendering his regrets at returning so late from the country, where he had spent the summer, and at not finding M. de Marsan at home.

Either from astonishment or from dislike, Emmeline could not conceal a certain emotion on seeing him; she blushed, and he noticed it.

As M. de Sorgues was interested in the opera and had supported two or three dancers at a hundred crowns a month; he thought himself to be irresistible and obliged to keep up the part. At dinner, he wished to know to what extent he had dazzled Madame de Marsan, and pressed her hand. She trembled from head to foot, so new was the feeling; it needed no more to make a fop, mad with pride.

The aunt decided, in a month, that M. de Sorgues was an admirer; it was an inexhaustible

subject of old-fashioned trifles and double-meaning words that Emmeline could hardly stand, but which her natural goodheartedness forced her to bear. Why the old Marquise found the admirer amiable, or why he pleased her less is, unhappily or happily, impossible to write and impossible to guess. But you can easily imagine the effect that was made on Emmeline by such ideas, accompanied, as they were, be it well understood, by instances in modern history, and all the rules of well-bred people who make love like dancing masters. I think there is found in a book, as dangerous as the liaisons mentioned in the title, a remark of which one does not fully understand the depth: "Nothing more quickly corrupts a young woman, it is said, than to find corrupt those whom she should respect." The proposals of Madame d'Ennery awakened in the soul of her niece a sentiment of a different nature. "Who then am I," she said to herself, "if the world is like this?" The thought of her absent husband tormented her; she would have liked to find him by her, when dreaming near the fire; she would, at least, have been able to consult him, and ask him the truth; he should know it, since he was a man, and she felt that the truth told by those lips could not be feared.

She took the course of writing to M. de Marsan and of complaining of his aunt. Her letter was written and sealed, and she was getting ready to

send it off, when, by a peculiarity of her character, she laughingly threw it into the fire. "I am very foolish to worry myself," said she, with her usual merriment. "Is this fine gentleman to make me afraid with his soft eyes?" M. de Sorgues entered at this moment. Seemingly, he had, on the way, made up his mind to take extreme measures; for he abruptly closed the door and, approaching Emmeline without a word, he seized and kissed her.

She remained dumb with astonishment, and, for an answer, rang the bell. M. de Sorgues, in his position of a man of good fortune, understood immediately and ran away. That very night, he wrote a long letter to the Comtesse, and he was seen no more at the *Moulin de May*.

CHAPTER III

EMMELINE spoke of this adventure to no one. She saw in it but a lesson for herself, and subject for reflection. Her disposition was not affected; only, when Madame d'Ennery, according to her custom, kissed her in the evening before retiring, a slight shudder caused the Comtesse to turn pale.

Far from complaining of the aunt, as she had at first resolved to do, she tried to be on good terms with her to make her tell her more.

The thought of danger was thwarted by the departure of the admirer, and there remained with the Comtesse only an insatiable curiosity. The Marquise had, in the full strength of the term, what might be called a stormy youth; in avowing a third of the truth, she already became very entertaining, and after dinner she would sometimes tell her niece half of it. It is true that every morning she awoke with the intention of telling no more, and of taking back all she had said; but these anecdotes unhappily resembled the sheep of Panurge: as the day advanced, confidences increased; so that, when midnight struck, it sometimes seemed as if the hand had been counting the number of the good lady's stories.

Buried in a large armchair, Emmeline gravely listened; I need not tell you that this seriousness was interrupted every moment by a foolish laugh, and by the most amusing questions. Despite her scruples and indispensable reticence, Madame de Marsan saw through the aunt, as she would decipher a precious manuscript where numerous leaves are missing, which the intelligence of the reader must supply; the world appeared to her under a new aspect; she saw, that to make the marionettes work, one must understand and hold the strings. This thought gave her an indulgence toward others which she has always preserved; it seems, truth to tell, that nothing shocks her, and no one is less severe on

her friends than she; this comes from the fact that experience has forced her to look upon herself as a being apart, and that, while amused at the weakness of others, she has given up imitating them.

It was then that, returning to Paris, she became that Comtesse de Marsan, of whom so much has been said, and who was so soon the fashion. It was no longer the little Duval, nor the young and turbulent wife, with her hair almost always down. A single trial and her will had suddenly changed her. She was a woman with head and heart who wished neither lovers nor conquests, and who, with recognized wisdom, found means of being everywhere liked. It seemed as if she had said to herself: "Since the world goes thus, well, we will take it as it is!" She had guessed life, and for a year, you remember, there was no pleasure without her. It was thought and said, I know, that such an extraordinary change could have been caused only by love, and the new brightness of the Comtesse was attributed to a new passion. One judges so quickly and one is at fault so easily! It was the charm of Emmeline, her chosen lot to attack no one, and herself to be invulnerable. If there is any one to whom can be applied that charming phrase of one of our poets: "I live by curiosity," * it is Madame de Marsan. That sentence fits her exactly.

* Victor Hugo—Marion Delorme.

M. de Marsan returned, the small success of his journey not having put him in good humor. His plans were upset. The Revolution of July came soon after this, and he lost his epaulets. Faithful to the party he served, he no longer went out except for rare visits to the Faubourg Saint-Germain. In the midst of these sad occurrences, Emmeline fell ill; her delicate health was broken by long suffering, and she thought herself about to die. A year after, you would hardly have recognized her. Her uncle took her to Italy, and it was only in 1832 that she returned from Nice with the worthy man.

I have told you that she had formed a circle of acquaintances. She found them again on her return; but instead of being vivacious and lively she became sedentary. It seemed as if the agility of her body had left her, and remained only in her spirit. Like her husband, she rarely went out, and you would seldom pass her window in the evening, without seeing the light of her lamp. Here gathered a few friends. As the best people look for each other, the de Marsan mansion was soon a very agreeable meeting place, neither too difficult nor too easy of access, and she had the good sense not to allow it to become merely a bureau of information. M. de Marsan, accustomed to a more active life, was weary of doing nothing. Conversation and idleness were never to his taste. At first, he was rarely seen at the

Comtesse's, and, at last, was no longer to be seen at all. It was even said that, tired of his wife, he had found a mistress; as it was not proved, we will not speak of it.

But Emmeline was now twenty-five years old, and without realizing what was taking place in her, she also felt herself getting weary. The "Lane of Sighs" came back to her memory, and solitude disturbed her. She seemed to desire something, and when she thought of what she missed, she found nothing. It did not occur to her that one can love twice, in life; as regards this, she thought she had exhausted her heart, and M. de Marsan was for her the sole depositary. When she listened to *La Malibran,* an involuntary fear seized her; home again and shut in, she sometimes passed the whole night singing alone, and it happened that the notes became convulsive on her lips.

She thought her passion for music was enough to make her happy; she had a box at *Les Italiens,* which she had hung with silk like a boudoir. This box, decorated with extreme care, was for some time the constant object of her thoughts. She had chosen the material and had had a little Gothic mirror which she liked taken there. Not knowing how to lengthen this child-like pleasure, she added something to it every day; she, herself, made for the box a little tapestry footstool which was a masterpiece. At last, when

everything was accomplished, when there was no longer means of inventing anything else, she found herself, alone, one night, in a beloved corner, face to face with Mozart's *Don Juan.* She looked at neither the room nor the theater; she felt an irresistible impatience; Rubini, Mademoiselle Heinefetter and Mademoiselle Sontag were singing the *trio des Masques,* which the public encored. Lost in thought, Emmeline listened with all her soul, and on coming back to herself, she perceived that she had stretched her arms over an empty chair at her side, and that she was pressing hard her handkerchief, in default of a beloved hand. She did not ask herself why M. de Marsan was not present, but she asked herself why she was there alone, and this reflection troubled her.

On returning, she found her husband in the drawing-room, playing chess with one of his friends. She sat down some distance away, and almost unwillingly, looked at the Comte. She followed the movements of that noble figure, which at the age of eighteen, she had thought so fine, when he had thrown himself before her horse. M. de Marsan was losing, and his frown did not add graciousness to the expression of his face. Suddenly, he smiled; luck was turning and his eyes shone.

"Do you then like this game so much?" asked Emmeline, smiling.

"Like music, to pass away the time," answered the Comte. And he continued without looking at his wife.

"To pass away the time," softly repeated Madame de Marsan, in her room, as she was going to bed. Those words chased all sleep away. "He is fine looking, he is brave," said she, "and he loves me." But still her heart was beating violently; she listened to the ticking of the clock, and the monotonous vibration of the pendulum was insupportable; she arose, intending to stop it. "What am I doing?" she asked herself; "shall I stop the hour and time, in forcing that small clock to be silent?"

With eyes fixed on the clock, she gave herself up to thoughts until now unknown. She thought of the past, of the future, and of the rapidity of life; she wondered why we are in this world, what we are doing here, and what awaits us in the future.

Searching her heart, she found but one day in which she had lived, that on which she had felt herself in love. The remainder seemed to her a confused dream, a succession of days as monotonous and uniform as the movement of the pendulum. She placed her hand on her brow, and felt an insatiable desire to live, shall I say, to suffer? Perhaps. She would, at this moment, have preferred suffering to sadness. She told herself that at any cost she must change her ex-

istence. She planned many travels, and no country pleased her. What should she look for? The uselessness of her desires, the uncertainty that overwhelmed her, frightened her; she thought she had passed through a moment of madness, ran to her piano, and wished to play her *trio des Masques,* but, at the first notes, she burst into tears and remained thoughtful and discouraged.

CHAPTER IV

Among the frequenters of the de Marsan mansion there was a young man named Gilbert. I feel, madame, that in talking to you of him, I am treading on delicate ground, and I do not quite know how to extricate myself.

For the last six months, he had visited the Comtesse once or twice a week, and what he felt for her should not, perhaps, be termed love. Whatever one may say, love is hope; and so far as her friends knew her, if Emmeline inspired desires, her conduct and character were not of a sort to embolden them. Gilbert had never, in the presence of Madame de Marsan, broached such a subject. She liked his conversation, his method of looking at things, his tastes, his spirit, and a certain malice which is the plaything of in-

tellect. Away from her, a look, a smile, some secret beauty merely glanced at, what shall I say? A thousand memories held him and incessantly pursued him, like those fragments of melodies which one can not rid oneself of after a musical evening but, as soon as he saw her, he became calm again, and the ease with which he could so often see her, perhaps prevented him from desiring more, for it is sometimes only on losing those we love that one feels how much one loved them.

When calling on Emmeline in the evenings, she was almost always found surrounded. Gilbert hardly ever arrived before ten o'clock, at the moment when there was the greatest number, and no one remained last. They all left together at midnight; sometimes later if they happened to be in the middle of some amusing story. The result was, that for six months, despite his assiduity with the Comtesse, Gilbert had never had a tête-à-tête with her. He knew her very well, nevertheless, and perhaps better than more intimate friends, maybe because of a natural penetration, and maybe for another reason which I must also tell you. He loved music as much as she, and as a dominant taste explains many things, it was by this means that he read her. There was some sentence in a song, some passage of an Italian air which was for him the key to the treasure. With loving glances, he would watch Emmeline,

and it was not often that he did not catch her eye. When it was a question of a new book or of a play seen the night before, if one of the two gave their opinion, the other approved with a nod. It would happen that they both laughed at some tale at the same time; and the touching recital of a fine action made them both turn away their heads together, for fear of betraying too strong an emotion. To explain all this by a good old word, there was between them—sympathy. But I hear you say, that is love; patience, madame, not yet.

Gilbert went often to *Les Italiens,* and sometimes would stay through an act in the Comtesse's box. By chance, on one of these occasions, *Don Juan* was once more being played. M. de Marsan was present. During the trio, Emmeline could not help looking at her side and remembering her handkerchief; this time, it was Gilbert's turn to dream at the sound of the violins and the melancholy harmony; his whole soul hung on the lips of Mademoiselle Sontag, and whoever has felt as he did would have thought him madly in love with the singer; the eyes of the young man glittered. On his somewhat pale face, shaded by long black hair, could be seen the pleasure he felt; his mouth was half open, and his trembling hand lightly beat time on the velvet of the balustrade. Emmeline smiled, and, at this moment, I am forced to acknowledge it, the

Comte, seated at the back of the box, was soundly sleeping.

So many obstacles oppose themselves here below to chances of this kind, that they are but incidents; but, for this very reason, they hit harder, and leave a more lasting memory.

Gilbert did not even dream of Emmeline's secret thought, and of the comparison she had been able to make. There were certain days though, when, at the bottom of his heart, he wondered if the Comtesse was happy; on asking himself this, he would not believe it; but, as he thought of it, he was none the wiser. Seeing almost the same people and moving in about the same set, they both necessarily had many occasions to write to each other on trivial matters. These indifferent notes, subject to the rules of etiquette, always found means to contain a word, a thought, which led to dreams. Gilbert often remained a whole morning with a letter from Madame de Marsan on his table before him, and in spite of himself, from time to time, would glance at it. His excited imagination made him look for some hidden meaning in mere nothings. Emmeline sometimes signed herself in Italian *Vostrissima*. He could but see in all this a friendly meaning, yet he would repeat to himself that this word really meant to say "All yours."

Without being such a man of the world as

M. de Sorgues, Gilbert had loved his mistresses. He was far from professing toward women that appearance of precocious contempt that the young man takes as the fashion, but he had his way of thinking, and I will explain, only by telling you, that the Comtesse de Marsan appeared to him an exception. Assuredly, many women are wise. I am mistaken, madame, they all are; but there are different ways of being so. Emmeline at her age, rich, pretty, rather sad, excited on certain points, indifferent to excess on others, surrounded by the best company, full of talent, loving pleasure—all this seemed to the young man strange elements of wisdom. "She is beautiful, though!" said he to himself, when promenading on the Boulevard des Italiens during the sweet evenings of August. "She likes her husband, without doubt, but it is only friendship; love is passed. Can she live without it?" And even while thinking thus, he reflected that he had been six months without a mistress.

One day when he was making a round of calls, he passed the door of the de Marsan mansion and knocked, contrary to his custom, it being still but three o'clock. He hoped to find the Comtesse alone, and was surprised that the idea of this happy chance now occurred to him for the first time. She was out, he was told. He retraced his steps in a bad temper, and, as was his custom, spoke aloud through his teeth. I need not tell

you what he was thinking of. His distraction conquered him, little by little, and he went out of his way. It was, I think, at the corner of the Bussy Square that he jostled heavily against some one in a somewhat odd manner, for he suddenly found himself face to face with an unknown countenance, to which he had just said out loud: "What if I were to tell you I loved you?"

He rushed away ashamed of his folly, at which he could not help laughing, when he found that his ridiculous apostrophe made a fairly good verse. He had written a few when he was at college. He hit upon the idea of finding a rhyme and he discovered it, as you shall see.

The next day was Saturday, the Comtesse's reception day. M. de Marsan began to give up his solitude, and there was a great company on this occasion. With candles lighted, and all the doors open, there was an enormous circle near the fireplace, the women on one side, the men on the other. It was not a place for billets-doux. Gilbert, not without difficulty, approached the mistress of the house; after having chatted for a quarter of an hour with her and the neighbors, he drew from his pocket a folded paper and amused himself by rumpling it. The paper, all crumpled as it was, appeared, nevertheless, to be a letter, it was natural that some one should notice it, which was just what occurred. But it

was not Emmeline. He replaced it in his pocket, then took it out again. At length the Comtesse caught sight of it, and asked him what he had in his hand. "They are," he said to her, "some verses I have written for a beautiful lady, and I will show them to you, if you will promise me that if you guess who it is, you will not prejudice her against me." Emmeline took the paper and read the following stanzas:

TO NINON

If I, brunette with eyes of blue,
Said "I love you," what would you say?
Sweet love is full of pain, 'tis true,
Yet for its sweets the pain I'd pay.

And if you knew that silent I
For six long, weary months had gone,
You would but smile and, mayhaps, sigh
And say "I knew," and cloud my dawn.

And did I say, "A madness slow
Has made of me your shadow thin"
(How sadness makes your beauty glow!),
"I doubt it," you would thus begin.

And if I said, 'neath twilight skies,
My soul lies hid in simplest thought,
Then were your soft celestial eyes
Into consuming fires wrought.

If you but knew how I, each night,
On bended knees do pray and weep,
Ninon, you would, with eyes more bright
Than stars, quite murder Beauty's sleep!

But you see not, for you are blind,
Yet not with love full well you know;
I stand beside you, yet you find
Yourself alone nor wish it so.

At eve how oft I hear you play
Music that fills the air with charms;
And when you dance I whirl away
A mad-cap fantom in your arms.

And when alone at night the door
I bolt and think, and think of you,
As o'er some precious book men pore:
Thus, pay I what was never due.

I rave, but you are ever calm;
I fret, and you but laugh the while;
Yet I love you, and there's the balm
For my poor heart, frown you or smile!

And should you wake me from my dream—
My dream of love—who knows but you,
Ninon, would, smiling, on me beam
And both our dreams in one come true?

When Emmeline had finished reading, she returned the paper to Gilbert, without a word. Shortly after, she asked him for it again and read it through a second time. She held the paper carelessly in her hand, as he had done

just before, and as some one was approaching, she rose, forgetting to give him back his verses.

CHAPTER V

"WHO are we," I ask you, "that we should act so lightly?" Gilbert had gone to this reception, feeling happy; he was trembling like a leaf when he returned. What little exaggeration and more than truth that was to be found in these verses, became true, when the Comtesse had read them. But she had made no answer, and it was impossible to question her before so many witnesses. "Was she offended?" How was he to interpret her silence. "Will she speak at the first occasion, and if so, what will she say?" Her image appeared now cold and severe, then sweet and laughing. Gilbert was unable to bear this uncertainty and, after a sleepless night, he went back to the Comtesse. He found that she had just driven away and was going to the *Moulin de May.*

He remembered that a few days ago he had, by chance, asked her if she meant to go into the country, and that she had answered "No." The memory of this suddenly struck him. "It is on my account she is leaving: she fears me. She loves me." At his last word, he stopped. He felt depressed and could hardly breathe. I do not

know what terror seized him; despite himself he trembled at the thought of having, so soon, made an impression on such a noble heart. The closed shutters, the mansion's deserted courtyard, servants loading a wagon, this sudden departure, almost amounted to flight; all this troubled and astonished him. He slowly retraced his steps. In a quarter of an hour, he had become another man. He no longer foresaw or calculated anything. He had forgotten his acts of the night before and even to what circumstances he owed his presence there. No feeling of pride had a place in his thoughts. During this whole day, he did not even think of ways of availing himself of his new position, nor of trying to see Emmeline. She no longer appeared to him to be tender nor severe. He saw her seated on the terrace, reading over the verses she had kept; and repeating to himself "She loves me," he wondered if he was worthy of it.

Gilbert was not yet twenty-five. When his conscience had spoken, his age, in turn, addressed him. He took the carriage for Fontainebleau the next day, and arrived the same night at the *Moulin de May*. When he was announced, Emmeline was alone. She received him with visible uneasiness. Seeing him close the door, she thought of M. de Sorgues and grew pale. But at Gilbert's first words she saw that he was no more tranquil than she. Instead of shaking

hands with her, according to his usual custom, he sat down, apparently less courageous and more reserved than before. They were alone together for about an hour, and neither the verses nor the love which they expressed were mentioned by either of them. When M. de Marsan came in from his walk, a cloud passed over Gilbert's eyes. He said to himself that he had profited little by his first tête-à-tête. With Emmeline, it was quite different. Gilbert's respect had moved her and she fell into the most dangerous reverie. She had understood that she was loved, and from the moment that she thought herself in safety, she also loved.

The next day, when she appeared at breakfast, the healthy glow of youth had returned to her cheeks. Her face, as well as her heart, had grown ten years younger. In spite of the stormy weather, she wished to go for a ride, and mounted a superb horse. The animal was not easily made to obey, and it seemed as if she wished to expose her life. She laughingly dangled her whip over the restless animal's head and could not resist an odd pleasure in hitting him without his deserving it. She felt him leap with anger, and, while he was shaking off the foam with which he was covered, she looked at Gilbert. By a rapid movement, the young man had approached and wished to seize the bridle. "Leave it," she said, laughingly. "I shall not fall this morning."

But they had to speak of the verses, and, in fact, they both spoke of them at length, but only with their eyes. This language is just as good as any other. Gilbert stayed three days at the *Moulin de May,* each moment, on the point of falling on his knees. When he looked at Emmeline's figure, he trembled lest he might not be able to resist the temptation of taking her in his arms. But as soon as she took a single step, he drew himself up to allow her to pass, as if he feared to touch her dress. The evening of the third day, he had announced his intention of leaving the next morning. During tea they spoke of waltzing and of Lord Byron's ode to the waltz. Emmeline remarked, that to be able to speak with such animosity, the pleasure must have very strongly roused the poet's envy at not being able to share it. She produced the book in proof of her statement, and so that Gilbert might read with her, she sat so near him that her hair brushed against his cheek. This light contact produced in the young man a spasm of joy, which he would have been unable to resist had not M. de Marsan been present. Emmeline noticed it and blushed: the book was shut and the incident closed.

Doubtless a most peculiar lover! There is a proverb which pretends " that what is put off is not lost." Generally speaking, I am not fond of proverbs, they are merely hackneyed commonplaces. There is not one but has its opposite, and

whatever your conduct, you may find one that can be applied to it. But I confess that the one I have mentioned seems to me to be wrong in a hundred cases for one in which it is right, especially, when used by those people who are as patient as they are resigned, as resigned as they are indifferent. That they use this language in Paradise, and that the saints say to each other, that which is put off is not lost, is to be marveled at. It is natural for those who have eternity before them, to take no account of time. But with us poor mortals, the chance is not as long. Moreover, I give you my hero just as he was. But, all the same, I think that, had he acted differently, he would have received the same treatment as M. de Sorgues.

Madame de Marsan returned at the end of the week. Gilbert arrived very early one evening. The heat was overpowering. He found her alone at the back of her boudoir, stretched out on a sofa. She was dressed in muslin, her arms and neck being bare. Two vases full of flowers scented the rooms and a warm and fragrant air was wafted through a door opening into the garden. Everything induced indolence. Nevertheless, a strange and unusual spirit of irritation hovered over their conversation. I have told you that it often happened that they expressed their feelings and sensations at the same time and in the same words. The evening in question, they

agreed about nothing, and were consequently in a bad humor. Emmeline was talking of certain women she knew. Gilbert spoke of them with enthusiasm and, in proportion, she spoke ill of them. It became dark and they were silent. A servant entered, carrying a lamp. Madame de Marsan said she did not want it and ordered it to be placed in the drawing-room. Hardly was this order given, than she appeared to change her mind, and, having risen somewhat perplexedly, she went toward the piano. "Come and see the footstool, belonging to my box at the opera, which I have had altered," she said to Gilbert. "I can now use it as a seat. It has just been brought back and I am going to give you some music, so that you may be the first to see it used."

She began softly with vague melodies and soon Gilbert recognized his favorite air, Beethoven's *Le Désir*. Gradually forgetting herself, Emmeline, in her playing, poured forth the most passionate expression, pressing the movement enough to make the heart throb, then suddenly stopping as if her breath had failed her, forcing the sound, then letting it die away. No words can ever equal the tenderness of such a language. Gilbert was standing, and, from time to time, her beautiful eyes were raised to consult his. He leaned on the corner of the piano and both fought against their emotions, when an al-

most ridiculous accident broke in upon their dreams.

The footstool suddenly broke and Emmeline fell at the feet of Gilbert. He rushed to give her his hand, which she took and arose laughing. He was pale as death, fearing she had injured herself. " All right," said she, " give me a chair. One would think I had fallen from the fifth floor."

She began to play a quadrille, and, while playing, was joking him about the fear he had felt.

" Is it not quite natural," he said to her, " that I should be afraid when I see you fall? "

" Bah! " she answered, " it was nervousness. Do you not think I am grateful? I will agree that my fall was ridiculous, but I find," she answered dryly, " that your fear was still more so."

Gilbert paced up and down once or twice and Emmeline's quadrille became less and less gay. She felt that, in wishing to jeer at him, she had wounded him. He was too moved to be able to speak. He came and leaned before her, in the same place as before. His swollen eyes were unable to restrain a few tears. Emmeline rose at once and went and sat down at the end of the room. He drew near and reproached her for her harshness.

The Comtesse in her turn was unable to answer. She remained silent and in a state of agitation impossible to describe. He took his hat to go,

and, not being able to make up his mind, sat down by her side. She turned away and put out her hand as if to make a sign for him to go. He seized it and pressed it to his heart. At this moment, the bell rang and Emmeline hid in a closet.

Only, on his arrival next day, did the poor boy realize that he was going to Madame de Marsan's. Experience made him afraid of finding her severe and offended at what had happened. He was mistaken, and found her calm and indulgent, and the Comtesse's first words were that she expected him. But she firmly announced that they must cease to see each other. "I am not sorry," said she to him, "for the fault that I have committed, and I do not attempt to blame myself for anything. But, although I may make you suffer, and may suffer myself, M. de Marsan is between us. I can not deceive him, and you must forget me."

Gilbert was astonished at this frankness, and the persuasive accent which accompanied it admitted of no doubt. He disdained the usual expressions and vain threats of death which are always uppermost in similar cases. He tried to be as courageous as the Comtesse, and by this to at least prove in what esteem he held her. He replied that he would obey and would leave Paris for a time. She asked where he thought of going and promised to write to him. She wished him to

know all about her and, in a few words, gave him the story of her life, explained her position, the state of her heart, and did not make herself out as any happier than she was. She returned his verses and thanked him for having given her a moment of happiness. "I gave myself up to it," she said, "without wishing to reflect; I was sure that the impossible would stop me, but I have not been able to resist that which is possible. I hope you will not see in my conduct a coquettishness which I have not attempted. I ought to have thought of you more, but did not think you so much in love as not to be able to soon cure yourself."

"I will be frank enough," answered Gilbert, "to say that I can not tell, but do not think I can recover from it. Your beauty has affected me less than your spirit and character and if the image of a beautiful face can be blotted out by absence or by time, the loss of a being such as you is forever irreparable. No doubt, I shall appear to overcome it, and it is quite certain that, after a time, I shall take up my usual existence, but my reason will always tell me that you might have been my life's happiness. Those verses you return me were written as if by chance; a moment of madness inspired them; but the sentiment they express has been with me ever since I knew you, and this only has given me the strength to hide it, although it is just as

durable. So we shall neither of us be happy and we shall sacrifice to the world that for which nothing can compensate."

"It is not to the world we shall do this," said Emmeline, "but to ourselves, or rather it is to me that you will do it. A lie is, to me, unbearable, and last night, after your departure, I almost told M. de Marsan everything. Come," she added gaily, "come, let us try and live!"

Gilbert respectfully kissed her hand and they parted.

CHAPTER VI

Hardly had they made up their minds to do this, than they felt that it was impossible. There was no need of long explanations for them both to agree. For two months Gilbert did not approach the Comtesse, and during this time they both lost their appetites and were both unable to sleep. At the end of this time, Gilbert one night felt so anxious and worried that, without thinking what he was doing, he took his hat and reached the mansion of the Comtesse, at his usual hour, as if nothing had happened. She did not think of reproaching him for not keeping his word. As soon as she saw him, she understood what he had suffered, and he found her so pale and changed that he was sorry he had not returned sooner.

That which was in Emmeline's heart was neither whim nor passion. It was the voice of nature itself which cried out to her that it wanted a new love. She had not thought much about Gilbert's character. He pleased her and he was there. He told her that he loved her, and he loved in quite a different way from that in which M. de Marsan had loved her. Emmeline's spirit, her intelligence, her enthusiastic imagination, all the noble qualities that were in her, suffered through her ignorance. The tears, she thought she shed without cause, fell in spite of herself, and forced her to learn the reason. Everything told her, her books, her music, her flowers, even her habits and her solitary existence, that she must love and resist, or yield and die.

It was with courageous pride that the Comtesse de Marsan considered the abyss in which she was about to fall. When Gilbert once more pressed her to his heart, she looked up at the sky as if to hold it a witness to her sin and to what it was going to cost her. Gilbert understood this sad look and compared the magnitude of his task to the noble-heartedness of his friend. He felt that in his hands rested the power of giving her back her life, or of degrading her forever. This thought caused him less pride than joy. He swore to consecrate himself to her and thanked God for the love he felt.

But the necessity for concealing the truth dis-

tressed the young woman. She no longer spoke of it to her lover and kept this thought secret. Besides, the idea of resisting for a time, never crossed her mind, from the moment she felt she could no longer resist. So to speak, she counted her chances of suffering and of happiness, and boldly staked her life on the result. At the time when Gilbert returned, she found herself obliged to spend three days in the country. He begged her to meet him somewhere before going. "I will do so if you wish," she answered, "but I pray you let me wait."

Toward midnight, on the fourth day, a young man entered the *Café-Anglais*. "What do you wish, monsieur?" asked the waiter. "Give me the best you have," answered the young man with such a happy voice that every one turned round.

At the same hour, in the rear of the de Marsan mansion, a half-open window blind allowed a light to be seen behind a curtain. Alone and in her nightdress, Madame de Marsan was sitting on a small chair in her room with the doors locked. "To-morrow I shall be his. Will he be mine?"

Emmeline did not think of comparing her conduct with that of other women. At this moment, she felt neither sorrow nor remorse. All was silent at the thought of the morrow. Dare I tell you of what she was thinking? Dare I write

She timidly observed herself

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what was, at this late hour, worrying this beautiful and noble woman, the most sensible and honest I know, on the eve of the single fault with which she ever had to reproach herself?

She was thinking of her beauty. Love, devotion, sincerity of heart, constancy, sympathy of taste, fear, dangers, repentance—all were banished and destroyed by the gravest doubts of her charms, and her personal beauty. The light we notice emanates from a candle she is holding in her hand. Her dressing glass is before her. She turns and listens; no sign, no noise; she half opens the veil that covers her, and, like Venus in the fable, before the shepherd, she timidly observed herself.

To explain the following day, I can not do better, madame, than to transcribe a letter from Emmeline to her sister, in which she herself expresses what she felt:

"I was his. An extreme depression had followed all my anxieties. I was broken and this uneasiness pleased me. I passed the evening in dreaming. I saw vague forms, I heard voices from afar, and could just distinguish 'My angel, my life!' I gave way again and again. While in that almost lethargic condition, which remains in my memory as the condition I would long for in Paradise, my thoughts did not once turn to the uneasiness of the preceding day. I

went to bed and slept like a newborn infant. Upon awakening in the morning, a confused remembrance of the occurrences of the day before quickly drove the blood to my heart. With my pulses throbbing, I sat up in bed and heard myself cry aloud, 'I have done it.' I leaned my head on my knees and pondered deeply. For the first time, I feared he had misjudged me. The ease with which I had yielded might have given him this opinion. In spite of his spirit and his tact, I could not help fearing an evil, worldly experience. Had it been for him only a whim, or a difficulty to be overcome? Too astonished and too moved, confused by all the feelings that oppressed me, I had not sufficiently studied his sentiments. I was afraid and short of breath. 'Oh, well!' I said to myself, 'the day he knows me, he will have arrears to pay.' All this blackness was suddenly illuminated by two memories. I felt a smile hovering around my lips; as the day before, again I saw his whole figure, his face, beautiful with an expression I had never seen elsewhere, not even in the chefs-d'œuvres of an old master. In it, I read love, respect, culture, and that doubt, that fear of not receiving what one so greatly desires. For a woman, that is the supreme moment, and pacified in this manner, I dressed. One takes great pleasure in one's toilet when one awaits one's lover."

CHAPTER VII

It had taken Emmeline five years to find out that her first choice could not make her happy. She had suffered from this for a year. For six months, she fought against a growing passion; for two months, against an avowed love. At length, she yielded and her happiness lasted two weeks.

Two weeks is short enough, is it not? I began this story without thinking, and I find that, coming to the event, the thought of which had made me take up my pen, I can say nothing about it except that it did not last long. How shall I try to describe it? Shall I tell you that which is unexplainable and which the greatest genius on earth must leave to be discovered in his works? Surely, you do not expect it and I will not commit such a sacrilege. That which comes from the heart can be written, but not that which is in the heart itself.

Besides, if one is happy for two weeks, one has barely time to notice it. Emmeline and Gilbert were still surprised at their happiness. They hardly dared to think of it and marveled at the intense tenderness which filled their hearts. "Is it possible," they asked each other, "that our looks ever met with indifference, and that our hands touched with coldness?" "What!" said Emme-

line. "Have I looked at you and my eyes were not dim with tears? Have I listened to you without kissing those lips of yours? You spoke to me as you did to every one and did I answer without saying I loved you?" "No," answered Gilbert, "your looks and your voice betrayed you. Good God! How they penetrated me! It is I who stopped through fear and I who am the cause of our not having loved earlier." Then they shook hands as if to say, "Let us be calm, or we shall die of love."

They had hardly become accustomed to seeing each other in secret and enjoying the danger of liberty, and Gilbert hardly knew this new expression that appears on a woman's face when she throws herself in her lover's arms. Hardly had the first smiles forced their way through Emmeline's tears and they had barely sworn to love each other forever—poor children! sure of their fate, than they gave way to it without fear, and slowly relished the pleasure of finding that they were not mistaken in their mutual hopes, and in fact, they were still thinking "How happy we will be!" when their happiness vanished.

The Comte de Marsan was a strong man, and, on important matters, his discernment was never at fault. He had noticed that his wife was sad. He thought she loved him less and had not worried about it. But he saw her preoccupied and uneasy and resolved not to endure it. As soon as

he took the trouble to discover the cause, he easily found it. At his first question, Emmeline appeared agitated, and at the second, was on the point of acknowledging everything. He had no wish for a confidence of this nature, and without mentioning it to any one, he went to the furnished house in which he had lived before his marriage and engaged a room. As his wife was about to retire, he came in robed in his dressing gown, and sitting opposite her, he spoke somewhat as follows:

"You know me well enough, dear, to know that I am not jealous. I have had much love for you, and have, and shall always have, much esteem and friendship. It is certain that, at our age and after so many years together, allowance must be made on both sides for us to be able to live in peace. For my part, I claim the liberty that a man should have, and I agree to your having the same. If I had brought as much money as you to this house, I should not speak in this manner, but should leave it to your comprehension. But I am poor, and our marriage contract left me poor at my own request. What, with another, would be only indulgence and wisdom, for me would be baseness. Whatever precautions one may take, an intrigue is never a secret. Sooner or later it will be talked about. When that day arrives, you must understand that I shall be ranked neither with complaining husbands nor even

with those who are ridiculous, but that I shall be pointed out as a wretch who will stand anything for the sake of money. It is not in my character to make an exposure which dishonors two families at the same time, whatever the result may be: I have no hate for you or any one else. It is for this very reason that I have come to tell you of the resolution I have made, in order to anticipate the consequent astonishment it might cause. From next week, I shall live in the furnished house where I had my quarters when I met your mother. I am sorry I must stay in Paris, but I can not afford to travel. I must board somewhere, and the house in question suits me. Make your plans, and, if possible, I will act accordingly."

It was with growing astonishment that Madame de Marsan listened to her husband. She sat like a statue. She saw he had made up his mind and could hardly believe it, and almost involuntarily threw her arms around his neck and cried that nothing in the world would make her agree to this separation. His only answer was silence. Emmeline burst into tears, fell on her knees, and wished to confess her sin. He stopped her and refused to listen. He tried to appease her, and repeated that he felt no resentment whatever against her; then, despite her entreaties, he left her.

The next day they did not see each other.

When Emmeline asked if the Comte was in, they answered that he had left very early in the morning and would not be back that day. She wanted to wait for him, and at six in the evening shut herself up in his room; but her courage failed and she was obliged to leave.

At breakfast the following day, the Comte appeared dressed for riding. The servants were doing up parcels and the corridor was littered with clothes in disorder. Emmeline went to her husband, and, seeing her enter, he kissed her on the forehead. They had breakfast in the Comtesse's bedroom. Opposite her was her dressing-glass; she fancied she saw her ghost. Her hair in disorder, her dejected appearance seemed to be reproaching her for her sin. In a hesitating voice, she asked the Comte if he still intended to leave the house. He answered that he had concluded to, and that his departure was arranged for the following Monday.

"Is there no way of putting off your departure?" she asked, in a supplicating voice.

"What is, can not be changed," answered the Comte. "Have you thought what you will do?"

"What do you wish me to do?" said she.

M. de Marsan did not answer.

"What do you wish?" she repeated. "In what way can I make you forgive me? What expiation, what sacrifice can I offer which you will consent to accept?"

"It is you who should know that," said the Comte. He rose and went away without saying any more. But that evening, he came back to his wife, and his appearance was less severe. These two days had so tired Emmeline that she had become frightfully pale. Noticing this, M. de Marsan could not help feeling some compassion.

"Well, my dear, what have you decided upon?"

"I have thought it over, and see that nothing can possibly be done."

"Do you then love him so much?" he asked.

In spite of his cold looks, Emmeline saw in that question a trace of jealousy. She thought the step, her husband was taking, might be but an attempt to draw nearer to her, and this idea hurt her. "All men are like this," she thought; "they despise what they possess and return with ardor to what they have lost by their own faults." She wished to find out in how far she was right, and haughtily replied:

"Yes, monsieur, I love him and on that subject I will not lie."

"I understand that," went on M. de Marsan, "and it would ill become me to wish to struggle against any one here; I have neither the means nor the wish."

Emmeline saw she had made a mistake. She wished to speak but found nothing to say. And what answer could she give to the Comte's action?

He had correctly guessed what was going on, and the decision he had come to was just, without being cruel. She began a sentence but could not finish it, and began crying. M. de Marsan said kindly, "Be calm; think that you have committed a sin, but that you have a friend who is cognizant of the fact who will aid you to make amends for it."

"What, then, would this friend do?" said Emmeline, "if he were as rich as I, since this wretched question of money makes him leave me? What would you do if our marriage settlement was not in existence?"

Emmeline rose, went to her desk, drew out her settlement and burned it at the candle that was on the table. The Comte watched her to the end.

"I understand you," he said to her at length. "And, although what you have just done is of no consequence, since the copy is with the lawyer, that action does you honor, and I thank you. But remember," he added, kissing Emmeline, "remember that if it were merely a question of canceling a formality, I should only abuse my advantage. With a stroke of a pen, you can make me as rich as yourself, I know, but I will not consent, and to-day less than ever."

"How proud you are," cried Emmeline, in despair. "Why do you refuse?"

M. de Marsan was holding her hand. He lightly pressed it and answered:

"Because you love him."

CHAPTER VIII

One of those fine autumn mornings, when the sun was shining in all its glory and seemed to bid adieu to the dying grass, Gilbert was seated at a little window on the second floor of a house in a road just behind the Champs-Élysées, leaning on his elbows. While humming an air from *Norma* he carefully watched each carriage as it passed. When the carriage reached the end of the road, the song stopped, but the carriage went on its way and he had to wait for the next. Many passed that day, but in none of them did the anxious young man see a small hat made of Italian straw or a black mantilla. One o'clock struck, then two. It was too late. Having looked at his watch twenty times, and paced his room the same number, he was still oftener, first distressed, then reassured. At length, Gilbert went down and wandered through the paths for some time. On returning, he asked the porter if there were no letters and the answer was in the negative. A presentiment of evil agitated him all day. Toward ten at night, and not without fear, he mounted the grand staircase of the de Marsan mansion. The lamp was not lighted and this surprised and alarmed him. He rang and no one came. He pushed the door and it opened and he stopped in the dining room. A maid came forward and he

asked if he could enter. "I will go and ask," she answered. As she entered the drawing-room, through the two doors, Gilbert heard a trembling voice, which he recognized, saying quite low, "Say I am not at home."

He has himself told me that these few words, uttered in the gloom, at the moment he least expected them, had done him more harm than a sword thrust. Inexpressibly astonished, he went out. "She was there," he said to himself, "and no doubt she saw me. What has happened? Could she not say a word to me or at least write?" Eight days passed without a letter and without his being able to see the Comtesse. At length, he received the following letter:

"Good-by! You must remember your intention of traveling and keep your word. Ah! at this moment, I am making a great sacrifice. A few deeply felt words, which you said to me on the subject of a fatal step I wished to take, alone have stopped me. I will live. But I can not entirely remove a thought which alone can give me a semblance of tranquillity. My friend, let me place it at a distance, only upon conditions; if, for instance, your heart feels an absolute indifference for me; if, once back again, with hardened heart, you do not come and see me; if you never think of my image or my love, it will be impossible to continue the awful life I lead. The more

unhappy is the one who remains; it must, therefore, be for you to leave. Will business allow you? Or, do you wish me to go—I do not know where? Answer, it is you who must have strength: pity me, I have none. Say—I know not what. That you will recover: but that is not true. Never mind, say something. Do not see me before you go; we must use strength, and I do not know whence to obtain it. For eight days I have not ceased crying and writing to you. I threw all my letters in the fire, and even this one you will find very incoherent. M. de Marsan knows all. I could not lie, and, in my case, he guessed it. But this letter is far from expressing the contradiction between my heart and my reason. Go out frequently during these days, that your departure may not appear too sudden. From this day, I can neither go out nor receive any one. At all times my voice fails me. You will write to me, will you not? It is impossible for you to leave without sending me a few lines. To travel! It is you who must travel!"

Gilbert's unhappiness appeared to him to be a dream. He thought of going to M. de Marsan and picking a quarrel with him. He lay on the floor in the middle of his room and cried most bitterly. Finally, he resolved to see the Comtesse at any cost, and to have the explanation of all this, which had been told him in such an unintelligible

manner. He ran to the de Marsan mansion, and without speaking to any servant, penetrated to the drawing-room. Here he stopped at the thought of compromising her whom he loved and of perhaps losing her through his own fault. Hearing some one approach, he hid behind a curtain. It was the Comte who entered. Having remained alone, Gilbert advanced and slightly opening the glass door of a room, he saw Emmeline in bed and near her was her husband. At the foot of the bed was a cloth covered with blood, and the doctor was wiping his hands. This sight horrified him. He trembled at the idea of adding to his mistress's troubles by his imprudence, and he left the house on tiptoe without having been noticed.

He soon learned that the Comtesse had been in danger of death. A new letter gave him the details of what had happened. " To give up seeing each other again," said Emmeline, " is impossible; we must not contemplate it. This thought, which so distresses you, causes me no pain, for I can not admit it for an instant. But, to separate for six months or for a year, that is what makes me sob, and rends my heart, for that is all that is possible." She added that if, before his departure, he felt too strong a desire to see her once more, she would consent. He refused this interview. He needed all his strength, and although convinced of the necessity of putting himself at

a distance, he was unable to make any plans. To live without Emmeline seemed to him to be a thought devoid of sense, or, so to speak, an illusion. Nevertheless, he swore to obey at all costs, and if needs be, to sacrifice his existence to Madame de Marsan's tranquillity. He put all his affairs in order, said good-by to his friends, and gave it out that he was departing for Italy. Then, when all was ready, and his passport obtained, he remained shut in, promising himself every day to leave the next morning and passing the day in tears. On her side, Emmeline was hardly more courageous, as you may imagine. As soon as she was able to drive, she went to the *Moulin de May*. M. de Marsan did not leave her. During her illness, he was like a brother in his friendship and like a mother in his care. I need not explain that he had forgiven all and that the sight of his wife's suffering had made him give up his idea of a separation. He spoke no more of Gilbert, and from this time on, I do not think he mentioned his name when alone with the Comtesse. He learned of the projected journey and appeared neither happy nor sad.

By his conduct, it was easily discerned that, at the bottom of his heart, he acknowledged himself to blame for having neglected his wife and for having done so little toward her happiness. When Emmeline was walking with him, arm in arm, in that long " Lane of Sighs," he appeared

nearly as sad as she, and Emmeline was thankful to him for never attempting to recall her old love, nor to fight against the new.

She burned Gilbert's letters, and in this unhappy sacrifice spared but a single line indited by her lover's hand, " For you, all I have in the world." On reading these words once more, she could not make up her mind to destroy them. It was the poor fellow's good-by. With her scissors, she cut out this line, and, for a long time, carried it next her heart. " If I must ever be separated from those words," she wrote to Gilbert, " I shall swallow them. My life is now a handful of ashes, and I am even unable to look at the fireplace for long without crying."

Was she sincere? you will perhaps ask. Did she make no attempt to see her lover again? Did she not repent her sacrifice? Did she never attempt to break her resolution? Yes, madame, she tried; I have no wish to make her better nor braver than she was. Yes, she tried to lie, to deceive her husband. Despite her words, her promises, her sorrow and her remorse, she saw Gilbert again, and after spending two hours with him in a transport of joy and love, she felt, on returning, that it was impossible for her to deceive or lie. I will tell you more: Gilbert felt the same, and did not ask her to return.

Nevertheless, he had not taken his departure and no longer talked of traveling. At the end of

a few days, he already wished to persuade himself that he was calmer and that there was no danger whatever in remaining. In his letters, he attempted to make Emmeline consent to his spending the winter in Paris. She hesitated, and while renouncing her love, began to mention friendship. They both searched for a thousand motives for lengthening their suffering, or at least of seeing each other suffer. What was about to happen, I know not.

I think I have told you, madame, that Emmeline had a sister. She was a beautiful, fine girl, and moreover of excellent disposition. Either from excessive timidity or from some other reason, she had never before spoken to Gilbert when she had chanced to meet him, except with extreme reserve and almost with repugnance. Gilbert's ridiculous behavior and method of speech, although simple and natural, could but wound the most perfect modesty and bashfulness. The very frankness of the young man and his high character had little chance of meeting with sympathy at the hands of the severe Sarah, which was the name of Emmeline's sister. Besides a few polite words, casually exchanged, a few compliments on Sarah's singing, and an occasional dance, was all the knowledge they had of each other and their friendship went no further.

In the midst of these latter events, Gilbert received an invitation to a dance from one of Ma-

dame de Marsan's friends, and to conform with the wishes of his mistress he thought it his duty to attend. Sarah was present that evening. He came and sat by her side. He knew what a tender affection united the Comtesse and her sister, and, for him, it was an occasion for speaking of his beloved to one who understood. The recent illness served as a pretext. To inform himself of Emmeline's health was to inform himself of her love. Contrary to her usual custom, Sarah replied with confidence and sweetness, and the orchestra, having given the signal for a dance in the midst of their conversation, she said she was tired and refused to dance with the partner who came to seek her.

The noise of the instruments and the tumult of the ball gave them more liberty and the young girl began to let Gilbert understand that she was aware of the cause of Emmeline's illness. She spoke of her sister's sufferings and told what she had seen of them. During this recital, Gilbert bent his head. When he lifted it, a tear coursed down his cheek. Sarah suddenly trembled and her beautiful blue eyes became troubled. "You love her more than I thought," said she to him. After this moment, she was quite different from what she had been with him before. She owned that she had, for a long time, perceived what was going on and that her coldness to him was because she had been able to see in him only the

trifling of a man of the world who makes his addresses to all women without considering the harm that may come of it. She spoke as a sister to a friend, warmly and frankly. The accent of truth, she used in showing Gilbert the absolute necessity for leaving the Comtesse in peace, impressed him more than all the rest and in a quarter of an hour he saw his duty clearly.

They were preparing to dance a cotillon. "Let us sit in the circle," said Gilbert. "We will dispense with appearing and can chat without being noticed." She consented; they sat down and continued talking of Emmeline. But, from time to time, a waltzer would force Sarah to take part in the figure, and she had to rise to hold the end of a scarf, a bouquet, or a fan. Gilbert remained in his chair, lost in thought, watching his beautiful partner dancing and laughing, her eyes still moist. She returned and they took up, once more, their sad conversation. It was to the sound of those German airs that had nursed the first days of his love that Gilbert swore to go away and forget Emmeline.

When the time for departure arrived, they both rose somewhat solemnly. "I have your word," said the young girl, "and I count on you to save my sister. And if you go," she added, taking his hand without thinking that they might be noticed, "if you go, there will sometimes be two thinking of the poor traveler." After these words they separated, and Gilbert left the next day.

TIZIANELLO

CHAPTER I

In the month of February, in the year 1580, a young man was crossing, at break of day, the Piazzetta, in Venice. His clothes were in disorder: his hat, on which was a fine scarlet plume waving in the breeze, was pushed down over his forehead. He was walking rapidly toward the *Riva degli Schiavoni,* his sword and mantle dragging in the dust, while, with a disdainful air, he cautiously stepped over the forms of the fishermen scattered on the ground. Having reached the *Ponte della Paglia,* he stopped and looked about him. The moon was setting behind the *Giudecca,* and the aurora of the morning was gilding the Ducal Palace. A thick smoke and a brilliant light from time to time escaped from a neighboring palace. Beams, stones, enormous blocks of marble, and other débris encumbered the *Canal of Prisons.* In the midst of the waters a fire had just destroyed a patrician's home. Flying sparks rose upward every moment, and by this brilliant light an armed soldier was to be seen mounting guard over the ruins.

But our young man seemed struck neither by this spectacle of destruction nor by the beauty of a sky tinged with the most delicate colors. For a time he looked in the distance, as if to distract his dazzled eyes. But the light of day seemed to have a disagreeable influence on him, for he folded his mantle round him and hastened on his way. He soon came to a stop at the door of a palace, on which he knocked. A valet, holding a candle in his hand, opened immediately. At the moment of entering he turned, and, casting a look at the sky, cried:

"By Bacchus, my carnival is costing me dearly!" This young man was named Pomponio Filippo Vecellio. He was Titian's second son, a child full of spirits and imagination, whose father cherished fond hopes for him, but whose passion for play led him continually into riotous ways. It was scarce four years since the great painter and his eldest son Orazio had died, almost at the same time, and young Pippo, in four years, had already squandered the greater part of the immense fortune that this double inheritance had brought him. Instead of cultivating his natural abilities and sustaining the glory of his name, he spent his days in sleeping and his nights in playing at the house of a certain Comtesse, or at least so-called Comtesse, Orsini, who made the ruination of the young Venetians her business. There assembled at her house every

night a numerous company of nobles and courtiers. There they supped and played, and as their supper cost them nothing, it goes without saying, that the dice took care to indemnify the mistress of the house. While the sequins were piling up in heaps, Cyprus wine was flowing, and the victims were ogling their hostess and, doubly dazed, left behind them both their money and their reason.

It was from this dangerous spot that we have just seen emerge the hero of this tale, and he had suffered that night more than one loss. Besides having emptied his pockets at dice, the only picture he had ever completed, a picture that the connoisseurs voted excellent, had just been destroyed in the fire at the Dolfino Palace. It was an historical subject, treated with a spirit and a boldness of touch almost worthy of Titian himself. Sold to a wealthy senator, this canvas had suffered the same lot as a great number of valuable works. The imprudence of a valet had reduced this wealth to ashes. But that was Pippo's smallest trouble. He thought only of the bad luck which had followed him with such unusual obstinacy and of the dice which had caused his loss.

On returning home, his first act was to remove the cloth that covered his table and to count the money remaining in his drawer: then, being naturally of a gay and heedless character, when he

had undressed, he sat at the window in his dressing-gown. Seeing that it was broad daylight, he wondered if he should close the shutters and go to bed or wake up like the rest of the world. It was a long time since he had seen the sun in the quarter whence it rises, and he found the sky more pleasing than usual. Before deciding to get up or to sleep, and still struggling against slumber, he took his chocolate on the balcony. As soon as his eyes closed, he could see a table, agitated hands and pale figures, and could hear the sound of the dice-boxes. "What fatal luck!" he murmured. "It is scarcely credible for one to lose with fifteen." And he saw his usual adversary, the old Vespasiano Memmo, throwing eighteen and taking possession of the gold that lay piled on the table. He quickly opened his eyes, to remove this bad dream, and watched the young girls walking on the quay. He seemed to see afar off a masked woman. He was astonished, although a carnival was taking place, for poor people are not masked, and it was strange that a Venetian lady should be out alone and on foot at such an hour.* But he saw that what he had taken for a mask was the face of a negress. He saw her soon from a closer point of view and noticed that she was possessed of tolerable good looks. She walked very fast,

* In bygone times, the Venetians were out and masked as long as the carnival lasted.

and a gust of wind driving her dress, streaked with flowers, tight against her hips, showed the outline of a graceful figure. Pippo leaned on the balcony and saw, not without surprise, that the negress was knocking at his door.

The porter was slow in opening.

"What do you want?" cried the young man. "Is it I that you want, brunette? My name is Vecellio, and, as they are keeping you waiting, I will come and open the door myself."

The negress raised her head.

"Is your name Pomponio Vecellio?"

"Yes, or Pippo, whichever you wish."

"You are Titian's son?"

"At your service. What can I do for you?"

After casting a rapid and curious glance at Pippo, the negress stepped back a pace or two and cleverly threw up on the balcony a small box done up in paper, then rushed off precipitately, occasionally turning round. Pippo picked up the box, opened it and found a delicate purse wrapped up in cotton. He suspected with reason that under the cotton there might be a note explaining this adventure. The note was there, all right, but was as mysterious as the rest, for it contained but these words:

"Do not spend too lavishly what I enclose. When you go out put to my charge a gold piece; that is sufficient for one day. And if in the evening there is anything left, however little it may

be, you can find a beggar who will thank you for it."

When the young man had turned the box a hundred different ways, examined the purse, and again looked at the quay, at least he saw clearly that he could discover no more. "I must admit," he thought, "that this gift is peculiar, but is cruelly ill-timed. The advice I am given is good, but it is too late to tell any one he is drowning, when he is at the bottom of the Adriatic. Who the devil can have sent me this?"

Pippo had easily recognized that the negress was a servant. He began to rack his brains as to who was the woman, or the friend, likely to send him this present, and as his modesty did not blind him, he persuaded himself that it was more likely to be a woman than one of his friends. The purse was of velvet, embroidered with gold. It seemed to him that it was too delicately made to have come from any store. So he reviewed in his mind the most beautiful women in Venice, then those who were the opposite. But here he stopped and wondered what he could do to find out who had sent him the purse. Thereupon, he dreamed most deep and sweet dreams: more than once he thought he had guessed. His heart throbbed while he was doing his best to recognize the writing. There was a Princess of Bologna who formed her capital letters in this way, and a

beautiful lady of Brescia whose writing was very similar.

Nothing is more disagreeable than an unpleasant idea suddenly gliding in among dreams of a like nature. It is just as if, while walking in a field of flowers, one stepped on a serpent. And it was just what Pippo felt when he suddenly remembered a certain Monna Bianchina, who latterly had particularly worried him. With this woman he had had an adventure at a masked ball, and although she was pretty, he felt no love whatever for her. Monna Bianchina, on the contrary, had suddenly fallen in love with him, and she had even forced herself to perceive love where, in reality, there was but politeness. She attached herself to him, wrote often and overwhelmed him with tender reproaches. But, on leaving her one day, he had sworn never to return, and he kept his word scrupulously. So he began to think that Monna Bianchina might well have made him a purse and sent it to him. This suspicion destroyed his gaiety and the illusions which buoyed him up. The more he reflected, the more likely he thought this supposition. Out of temper, he closed his window and decided to go to bed.

But he was unable to sleep. In spite of all the probabilities, it was impossible for him to give up a doubt that flattered his vanity. He continued

involuntarily to dream. He wished to forget the purse and to think no more about it: he wanted to forget the very existence of Monna Bianchina. Nevertheless he had drawn the curtains and had turned his face toward the wall so as not to see daylight.

Suddenly he leaped out of bed and summoned his servants. He had suddenly thought of something, simple enough, that had hitherto escaped him. Monna Bianchina was far from rich. She had but one servant and this servant was not a negress, but a large girl from Chioja. How had she on this occasion been able to obtain this unknown messenger whom Pippo had never seen in Venice? " Blessed be your black skin," he cried, " and the African sun that colored it." And without waiting longer, he called for his doublet and ordered his gondola.

CHAPTER II

He had resolved to call upon the Signora Dorothée, wife of Pasqualigo, the advocate. This lady, respected on account of her years, was one of the richest and most intelligent ladies of the republic. Besides, she was Pippo's godmother, and as there was no one of any distinction in Venice whom she did not know, he hoped she might help to fathom the mystery that surrounded him.

Still, he thought it too early as yet to present himself before his patroness, and while waiting, strolled about under the Procuraties.

As luck willed it, whom should he meet there but Monna Bianchina, who was purchasing some cloth. He entered the store and without exactly knowing why, after a few commonplace remarks, he said to her, "Monna Bianchina, you sent me this morning a nice present, and gave me good advice. I tender you my most humble thanks."

Speaking in this tone of certainty, he perhaps expected at once to rid himself of the doubt that had tormented him. But Monna Bianchina was too cunning to exhibit surprise before having discovered if it was to her interest to show any. Although she had really sent nothing to the young man, she saw that here was the means of putting him off the scent. It is true, she answered that she did not know of what he was speaking, but she took good care, in saying this, to laugh so slyly and blush so modestly that Pippo remained convinced, despite appearances, that the purse was from her. "And since when," he asked her, "have you had that pretty negress at your command?"

Disconcerted by this question, and not knowing how to answer, Monna Bianchina hesitated a moment, and then gave a hearty laugh and bruskly left him. Alone and disappointed, Pippo gave

up the visit he had planned. He went home, threw the purse in a corner, and no longer thought about it.

But some days later it happened that he lost a large sum in gambling and gave his note. As he went out to pay his debt, it seemed convenient for him to make use of this purse, which was large and looked well in his belt. So he took it, and that very night he played again and lost still more.

"Are you going on?" asked Ser Vespasiano, the old notary of the Chancellor's office, when Pippo had no more money.

"No," answered he, "I do not wish to play any more, on my note of hand."

"But I will lend you whatever you want," cried the Comtesse Orsini.

"And I also," said Ser Vespasiano.

"And I also," repeated one of the Comtesse's numerous nieces in a soft and sonorous voice; "but open your purse, Signor Vecellio, there is still another sequin inside."

Pippo smiled, and at the bottom of his purse found, in fact, a sequin, which he had forgotten. "So be it," said he, "let us have another throw, but I will risk no more." He took the dice-box, won, and, doubling the stakes, continued to play. In short, at the end of an hour he had made up his loss of the night before and that of the evening. "Are you going on?" in his turn he asked

Ser Vespasiano, who no longer had anything in front of him.

"No! For I must be a big fool to allow myself to be drained by a man who would risk but one sequin. Cursed be that purse! No doubt it is bewitched."

The notary left the room furious. Pippo was preparing to follow him, when the niece, who had advised him, laughingly remarked, "Since it is to me you owe your luck, make me a present of the sequin which helped you to gain it."

This sequin had a small mark on it by which it could be recognized. Pippo looked for it, found it and he was already handing it over to the pretty niece, when he suddenly cried:

"No, my beautiful one, you can not have it. But to show you I am not greedy, here are ten others which I beg you to accept. As for this one, I wish to follow some advice lately given me and I present it to Providence."

So speaking, he threw the sequin out of the window. "Is it possible," he said to himself, on returning home, "that the purse of Monna Bianchina brings me luck? It would be a singular turn of fortune if a thing, which in itself is disagreeable to me, had a pleasing influence over me." And, in fact, it soon appeared to him that every time he made use of this purse, he won. When he placed a gold piece in it he could not help a certain superstitious feeling, and, in spite

of himself, he sometimes reflected on the truth contained in the words he had found at the bottom of the box. "A sequin is a sequin," he would say to himself, "and there are plenty of people who do not possess one for each day." This thought made him less imprudent and led him to somewhat curtail his expenses.

Unfortunately, Monna Bianchina had not forgotten her meeting with Pippo under the Procuraties. To confirm the mistake she had led him to believe in, from time to time she sent him a bouquet or some small nothing, accompanied by a short note. I have already stated that he was very tired of these attentions, to which he had made up his mind not to reply.

So it happened that Monna Bianchina, driven to desperation by this coldness, attempted a daring move, which greatly displeased the young man. She went alone to his house during his absence, bribed the servant, and succeeded in hiding in his room. On returning, he found her there, and felt himself obliged to tell her plainly that he had no love for her and that he begged her to leave him in peace.

La Bianchina, who, as I have said, was pretty, gave way to terrible anger. She overwhelmed Pippo with reproaches, but this time no longer tender ones. She told him he had deceived her in speaking of love, that she thought herself deeply injured, and finally, that she would be revenged.

Pippo did not listen to all these threats, without himself being irritated. To show her that he was not afraid, he forced her, there and then, to take back a bouquet she had sent him that morning; and, as he happened to lay hands on the purse, he added: "Here, take this, too. This purse has brought me luck, but understand by this that I want nothing from you."

Hardly had he given way to this moment of anger, than he regretted it. Monna Bianchina took good care not to enlighten him regarding the lie she had told him. She was full of rage, but also of dissimulation. She took the purse and left, fully decided to make Pippo repent of the way in which he had treated her.

That evening he played as usual and lost. The following days brought no better luck. Ser Vespasiano always had the better dice and won considerable sums from him. He revolted against his luck and his superstition, became obstinate and lost again. At last, one day on leaving the Comtesse Orsini, he could not help crying on the stairs, "May God forgive me! I believe that old fool was right, and that my purse was bewitched, for I have not had a fair throw since the day I returned it to La Bianchina."

At this moment he perceived floating before him a dress embroidered with flowers, from which there appeared two active and slender legs; it was the mysterious negress. He doubled his

pace, accosted her, and asked her who she was and to whom she belonged.

"Who knows?" answered the African, with a teasing laugh.

"You, I suppose. Are you not Monna Bianchina's servant?"

"No. Who is Monna Bianchina?"

"Well, by God! She it is who told you the other day to bring me that box which you so cleverly threw on to my balcony."

"Oh! Your Excellency, I do not think so."

"I know it; do not try to excuse yourself. It is she herself who told me."

"If she told you, . . ." answered the negress in a hesitating manner. She shrugged her shoulders and thought for a moment. Then, giving Pippo a light tap on the cheek with her fan and running away, she cried:

"My fine gentleman, you have been tricked." The streets in Venice form a labyrinth so complicated, they cross in so many different ways, in such a various and unexpected way, that Pippo, after having let the young girl escape, could not find her again. He felt very embarrassed, for he had made two mistakes, the first in giving his purse to Bianchina, the second in not keeping the negress. Chancing to enter the town without being aware of it he went toward the palace of the Signora Dorothée, his godmother. He was sorry he had not made her the visit he

had planned some days before. He was accustomed to consult her on everything that interested him and rarely had recourse to her without learning something.

He found her alone in the garden, and after having kissed her hand, remarked:

"My dear godmother, think of the foolishness of which I have just been capable. Not long ago, I received a purse . . ." But hardly had he said these words, when the Signora Dorothée began to laugh. "Well," said she, "is not the purse pretty? Do you find the golden flowers look well on the red velvet?"

"What!" cried the young man, "is it possible you know of this?"

At this moment, several senators entered the garden. The venerable lady rose to receive them and made no answer to the questions that Pippo, in his astonishment, continued to ask her.

CHAPTER III

When the senators had left, the Signora Dorothée, in spite of her godson's prayers and importunity, absolutely refused to say more. She was annoyed that a sudden moment of mirth had made her acknowledge that she knew the secret of an adventure with which she wished to have nothing to do. Pippo still insisted,

" My dear child," said she, " all I can say is that it is true that I might be rendering you a service by giving you the name of the person who embroidered that purse for you, for she is assuredly one of the most noble and beautiful ladies in Venice. Let this be sufficient. In spite of my wish to oblige you, I must be silent. I will not betray a secret which I alone possess and which I could not tell you, unless requested to, for I could then honorably do so."

" Honorably, my dear godmother? But can you think that in confiding to me only . . ."

" I understand," answered the old lady. And as, despite her dignity, she could not help a little sarcasm, she added: " Since you sometimes write poetry, why not make this the subject of your verses? "

Seeing that he could find out nothing, Pippo put an end to his questions. But his curiosity, as one may think, was excited to no small degree. He stayed to dinner with the Pasqualigo, unable to make up his mind to leave his godmother and hoping that his fair unknown might possibly call that night. But he saw only senators, magistrates, and the most important men of the republic.

At sunset, the young man separated from the rest of the company and went and sat down in a little grove. He thought of what he must do and determined on two things: to make La Bian-

china give up his purse, and to follow the advice that the Signora Dorothée had laughingly given him, that is to say, to write a poem on his adventure. He also resolved to give this poem, when finished, to his godmother, who would no doubt show it to his fair unknown. Not wishing to delay any longer, he at once put into execution his dual project.

After having arranged his doublet and carefully placed his hat on his head, he first examined himself in a mirror to see if he looked well, for his first thought had been to again deceive La Bianchina by fictitious protestations of love and to persuade her by kindness. But he soon gave up this idea, reflecting that in this way he would only bring to life the woman's passion and make further trouble for himself. He took the opposite course and hastily rushed to her house, as if he were furious. He prepared to create a scene and so well to intimidate her that she should henceforth leave him alone.

Monna Bianchina was one of those blonde Venetians with black eyes, whose resentment has always been looked upon as dangerous. Since he had so misused her, Pippo had not received a single message from her. She was, no doubt, preparing in silence the vengeance of which she had spoken. It was therefore necessary to strike a decisive blow, in default of increasing the harm done. She was about to go out when the young

man arrived. He stopped her on the staircase and forced her to go back to her room.

"Unhappy woman!" he cried. "What have you done? You have destroyed all my hopes and your vengeance is accomplished!"

"Good God! What has happened to you?" asked La Bianchina, thunderstruck.

"Can you ask? Where is that purse that you told me came from you? Do you still dare lie to me?"

"What matters it if I have lied or not? I do not know where that purse has gone."

"You will die or return it!" cried Pippo, rushing at her. And, with no respect for a new gown which the poor woman had just put on, he violently tore away the cloth that covered her breast and placed his dagger on her heart.

La Bianchina thought her end had come and began to call for help, but Pippo choked her with his handkerchief, and without her being able to utter a sound, he forced her to return the purse, which happily she had kept. "You have caused trouble to a powerful family," he then told her. "You have forever troubled one of the most illustrious houses in Venice! Tremble! This redoubtable house watches you: neither you nor your husband will now take a single step without its being known. The Lords of the Night have inscribed your name in their book; think of the dungeons of the Ducal Palace! At the first word

you say, that makes known the terrible secret that your malice has caused, your entire family disappears!"

With these words he left, and every one knows that in Venice none more terrifying could be uttered. The pitiless and secret arrests of the *Corte Maggiore* spread so great a terror that those who thought themselves even suspected already looked upon themselves as dead. This was just what happened in the case of La Bianchina's husband, Ser Orio, whom she had told, in part, of the threat that Pippo had just made. It is true that she ignored the motives, and in fact Pippo himself ignored them, since all this was but a fable. But Ser Orio prudently thought it was not necessary to know why one had brought down upon oneself the wrath of the supreme court, and that the most important thing was to avoid it. He was not born in Venice. His parents lived on the mainland. So he embarked the next day with his wife and they were no longer spoken of. It was thus that Pippo found means of getting rid of La Bianchina, and of repaying her with interest for the injury she had done him. All her life she thought that a state secret was really connected with the purse, which she had wished to steal, and as in this strange event everything was a mystery to her, she could only conjecture. The parents of Ser Orio made this the subject of their particular conversation. Beginning

with suppositions they finished by creating a plausible tale. "A great lady," said they, "had become enamored of Tizianello, that is to say, of Titian's son, who himself was in love with Monna Bianchina, and of course in vain. Now this great lady, who had herself embroidered a purse for Tizianello, was no other than the Doge's wife. Imagine her wrath on learning that Tizianello had sacrificed this gift of love to La Bianchina!"

Such was the family tradition repeated with lowered voices in the little house of Ser Orio in Padua.

Pleased with the success of his first enterprise, our hero now thought of attempting the second—to write a poem for his beautiful unknown. As the strange comedy in which he had taken part had moved him, in spite of himself, he commenced by rapidly writing one or two verses full of a certain rapture. Hope, love, mystery, all the impassioned expressions common to poets, rushed headlong through his mind. "But," thought he, "my godmother told me it was to do with one of the most noble and most beautiful ladies in Venice: I must therefore be proper and approach her with more respect."

He effaced what he had written, and passing from one extreme to the other, he put together a few sonorous lines to which he tried hard to adapt, not without trouble, thoughts similar to his lady;

that is to say, the most beautiful and noble he could think of. For hope too bold, he substituted a fearful doubt; in the place of mystery and love, he spoke of respect and gratitude. Unable to eulogize the charms of a woman he had never seen, he, as delicately as possible, made use of some vague terms which might apply to all faces. Shortly, after two hours of thought and work, he had written twelve passable verses, extremely harmonious and very significant.

He made a careful copy on a fine sheet of parchment, and on the margins designed birds and flowers which he carefully colored. But directly his task was finished he read over his verses once more, and thereupon threw them out of the window into the canal, which passed close to the house. "Whatever am I doing?" he asked himself. "Of what use to follow up this adventure, if my conscience does not speak?"

He took his mandolin and walked up and down the room, singing and playing an old tune composed for some of Petrarch's sonnets. At the end of a quarter of an hour he stopped; his heart was throbbing. He no longer thought of conventionalities, nor of the effect he might produce. The purse he had seized from La Bianchina, and which he had just brought back in triumph, was lying on the table. He looked at it and said to himself: "The woman who made that for me must love me and know how to love, too. Such a

work is long and difficult; those light threads, those brilliant colors take time, and in working, she thought of me. In the few words that accompanied that purse there was a friend's advice and not one ambiguous word. It is a love challenge sent by a woman with a heart. If she thought of me but for one day, I must bravely take up the glove."

He started again and in taking up his pen was more agitated by fear and hope than when he had risked the largest sums on the throw of the dice. Without reflecting and without stopping, he hastily wrote a sonnet, of which the following is about the meaning:

When first I conned the somber beauty of
His song, I longed to tune my new-strung lyre
And catch the wondrous harmony and fire—
Whose endless fuel was brave Petrarch's love
Of Laura sweet—that I might somehow prove
Another Laura quite so loved. O, dire
The effort! When did Boldness so aspire,
Or tree-frog try to imitate the dove?

Alas, I've Petrarch's message in my heart
And am a moody lover day and night
E'er breathing halting prose for poesy
And making putty ape the marbled art:
O, sweet, sad master of a death delight
For such fond sorrow I'd unhappy be!

Pippo then next day called at the house of the Signora Dorothée. As soon as he found himself

alone with her, he placed his sonnet in the illustrious lady's lap, saying, "For your friend." The Signora at first appeared surprised, then she read the verses, and vowed she would never show them to any one. But Pippo only laughed, and as he was sure of the contrary, he left, assuring her he felt no uneasiness regarding the matter.

CHAPTER IV

NEVERTHELESS, he lived through the following week in great trouble, but this trouble was not without its charms. He remained at home and did not dare, so to speak, to stir up Fortune for fear of affecting it. In this he was wiser than one usually is, at his age, for he was only twenty-five, and the impatience of youth will often make us overreach ourselves in attempting too quickly to achieve our desires. Fortune wishes us to help ourselves and to know when the time is ripe: for, according to Napoleon's saying, she is a woman. But, for this very reason, she wishes to appear to grant that which is snatched from her, and she must be given time to open her hand.

It was on the ninth day, toward evening, that the capricious goddess knocked at the young man's door, and not for nothing, as you shall see. He went down and opened the door himself. The

negress was on the step and held in her hand a rose, which she held to Pippo's lips.

"Kiss this flower," she said. "It carries a kiss from my mistress. Can she come and see you in safety?"

"It would be very imprudent," answered Pippo, "if she came in daylight. My servants could not help seeing her. Is it possible for her to go out in the evening?"

"No. Who would dare to in her place? She can neither go out in the evening, nor allow you to call on her."

"Then she must consent to go elsewhere, to some spot I will mention."

"No, she wishes to come here. See if you can not arrange it."

Pippo reflected for a few moments. "Can your mistress rise early?" he asked the negress.

"At the same hour as the sun."

"Well, listen. I generally get up very late, consequently every one sleeps to a late hour. If your mistress can come at daybreak I will await her, and she can reach here without being seen by a soul. As regards her leaving later on, I will look after that—that is, if she can stay with me till evening."

"She will do it. Will to-morrow be convenient?"

"To-morrow at daybreak," said Pippo. He slipped a handful of sequins under the messen-

ger's gorget; then, without asking any further questions, he went back to his room and shut himself in, resolved to watch till daylight. He at first undressed, so that it might be thought he was going to bed. When he was alone, he lit a good fire, put on an embroidered shirt, a scented collar, and a white velvet doublet with sleeves of Chinese satin. Then, when all was in order, he sat by the window and began to think of his adventure.

He was not so favorably impressed as one might think by the promptitude with which his lady had accorded him an interview. You must not forget either that this story is taking place in the sixteenth century, and that love affairs were then much quicker arranged than now. From the most authentic testimony it appears certain that in these times what we should call indelicacy was classed as sincerity, and there are even grounds for thinking that what is to-day named virtue then appeared to be hypocrisy. However this may be, a woman in love with some fine fellow soon gave herself to him and he would for this reason have no worse an opinion of her. No one thought of blushing for that which appeared natural. In these times, a gentleman of the Court of France would carry on his hat, in the place of a plume, a silken stocking belonging to his mistress, and he would carelessly tell those who were surprised to see him in the Louvre in this attire,

that it was the stocking of a woman who was making him die of love.

Besides, such was Pippo's character that, had he been born in the present century, he would perhaps still have been of the same mind. Despite much dissipation and folly, if he was capable of sometimes lying to others, he never lied to himself. By this I mean that he liked things for what they were worth and not for appearances, and that, while fully capable of dissimulation, he never intrigued unless his desires were real. If he thought the letter he had received was but a whim, at least he did not think it the whim of a coquette: I told you just now the reasons, which were, the care and delicacy with which the purse had been embroidered and the time it must have taken to do it.

While his spirit was endeavoring to anticipate the happiness in store for him, he thought of a Turkish marriage of which he had been told. When the Orientals take unto themselves a wife, they see the face of their fiancée only after marriage, and until then she remains veiled before him, as before every one else. They rely on what their parents have told them and marry in this way on what they have heard. The ceremony over, the young wife shows herself to her husband, who can then settle for himself whether the bargain was good or bad. As it is too late to draw back, there remains nothing to be done but to find

it good, and these unions do not seem any more unhappy than others.

Pippo found himself in just the same position as a Turkish fiancé. It is true he did not expect to find a virgin in his unknown lady, but he easily consoled himself for this. Besides, there was this difference to his advantage, that it was not such a solemn tie he was about to contract. He could give himself up to the charms of expectation and surprise without troubling about the inconvenience, and this consideration seemed sufficient to make up for what might otherwise be lacking. So he imagined this night to be his bridal one, and it is not to be wondered at that at his age this thought caused him transports of joy.

The first bridal night, in fact, to an active imagination must be one of the greatest possible pleasures, for it is preceded by no trouble. Philosophers insist, it is true, that trouble gives more relish to the pleasure she accompanies, but Pippo thought that a strong sauce did not make fish any the fresher. He liked easy possession, but he did not wish it gross, and unhappily it is an almost invariable law that exquisite pleasure is dearly bought. But the marriage night is an exception to this rule. It is a unique circumstance in life, which at the same time satisfies the two longings most dear to a man, indolence and lust. It brings to a young man's bedroom a woman crowned with flowers, who ignores love,

and whose mother has attempted, since she was fifteen, to ennoble her soul and to adorn her spirit. To obtain a look from this beautiful creature you might perhaps have to beg for a whole year; nevertheless, to possess this treasure, the husband has only to open his arms. The mother is absent and God himself allows it. If on awakening from such a beautiful dream one finds one is not married, who would not wish to do it every night?

Pippo did not regret not having questioned the negress, for a servant, in such a case, can not help but praise her mistress were she even uglier than sin, and the two words let fall by the Signora Dorothée were sufficient. He would only have liked to know if she was a blonde or a brunette. To form an idea of a woman, when one knows she is beautiful, nothing is more important than to know the color of her hair. Pippo hesitated for a long time between the two colors; finally, so as to be at peace, he imagined her hair to be auburn.

But he was then unable to determine the color of her eyes. Had she been a brunette he would have supposed them black—blue if she were blonde. He pictured them as blue, not that clear and undefined blue that is by turn both gray and greenish, but that azure blue like the sky, which in moments of passion takes a more somber hue and becomes as dark as a raven's wing.

Hardly had these charming eyes appeared before him with a tender and profound look, than

his imagination encircled them with a brow white as snow, and two cheeks as rosy as the rays of the sun on the summit of the Alps. Between these two cheeks, as soft as a peach, he imagined he saw a tapering nose like that of the ancient bust which has been called "Greek Love." Underneath, a vermilion mouth, neither too large nor too small, allowed a fresh and voluptuous breath to escape between two rows of pearls. The chin was well formed and slightly rounded, the expression frank but somewhat haughty. On a rather long neck, which was smooth and of an ivory white, this gracious and altogether sympathetic * head was softly poised like a flower on its stem. As for this beautiful image, created by imagination, it only lacked being real. "She is coming," thought Pippo, "she will be here when day arrives;" and what is not the least surprising part of his strange dream was that unknowingly he had just painted his future mistress's portrait exactly.

When the State Frigate, which guards the entrance to the Port, fired a gun to indicate six in the morning, Pippo saw that the light from his lamp was becoming reddish and that the glass in his window was of a light-blue tint. He immediately went to the casement. This time he no

* *Simpatica*—An Italian word which has no equivalent in our language, perhaps because our character does not possess the equivalent of what it expresses.

longer looked around him with half-closed eyes. Although he had not slept, he never felt more free and active. Dawn began to show itself, but Venice was still sleeping: that lazy home of pleasure does not awaken so early. At the hour when our shops are opening, the passers-by crossing the streets, carriages rolling, in Venice, the mist was playing on the deserted lagoon and covered the silent palaces as with a shroud. The wind hardly caused a ripple. A few sails appeared far off on the shores of Fusina, carrying the day's provisions to the "Queen of the Sea." Alone, at the summit of the sleeping city, the shining angel of the Campanile of Saint Mark's reared itself from out the twilight, and the sun's first rays gleamed on the golden wings.

But the innumerable churches of Venice were loudly ringing the Angelus. The pigeons of the republic, warned by the sound of the bells, the strokes of which they can count with marvelous instinct, were swiftly crossing the bank of the Riva degli Schiavoni in flocks, attracted by the grain regularly scattered for them at that hour in the great square. The mist was lifting, little by little, and the sun appeared. A few fishermen were shaking their cloaks and began to clean their boats: one of them was singing, in a clear voice, a verse from a national air. A bass voice answered from the depths of a merchant ship; another, further off, joined in the chorus of the

second verse. Soon the choir was organized, each did his part while still working, and a beautiful matutinal saluted the daylight.

Pippo's house was situated on the bank of the Schiavoni, not far from the Nani Palace, at the junction of a small canal. At this instant, at the end of this obscure canal, shone the prow of a gondola. A solitary gondolier was on the stern, but the frail boat was cleaving the water with the rapidity of an arrow, and seemed to glide over the thick mirror in which its flat oar was dipped at regular intervals. At the moment when it passed under the bridge which separates the canal from the great lake, the gondola stopped. A masked woman, of a noble and slender figure, came out and went toward the quay. Pippo immediately went down and advanced toward her. "Is it you?" said he to her in a low voice. For all answer she took the hand he held out and followed him. Not a single domestic in the house was, as yet, awake. Without a word, on tiptoe they crossed the lower gallery where the porter slept. Having reached the young man's room, the lady sat on a sofa and remained thoughtful for a while. She removed her mask. Pippo understood then that the Signora Dorothée had not deceived him, and that he had before him, as she had said, one of the most beautiful women in Venice, and the heiress of two noble families, Beatrice Loredano, widow of the procurator Donato.

CHAPTER V

It is impossible to paint in mere words the beauty of the first glances which Beatrice cast about her when she had uncovered her face. Although she had been a widow for eighteen months, she was but twenty-five, and if the step she had just taken has appeared bold to the reader, it was the first time in her life she had taken a similar one: for it is certain that until then she had loved no one but her husband. Besides, this proceeding had so worried her that, so as not to change her purpose on the way, she had been obliged to summon all her strength, and now her eyes were at the same time full of love, confusion, and courage.

Pippo looked at her with such admiration that he was incapable of speaking. Whatever the circumstances, it is impossible to see a perfectly beautiful woman without astonishment and without respect. Pippo had often met Beatrice when out walking, and at private parties. He had himself praised her beauty a hundred times and had heard others do the same. She was a daughter of Pietro Loredano, member of the Council of Ten, and great-granddaughter of the famous Loredano, who took such an active part in the trial of Giacomo Foscari. The pride of this family was but too well known in Venice, and Beatrice

passed, in the eyes of all, as having inherited the spirit of her ancestors. When still quite young, she had been married to the procurator Marco Donato, and the death of the latter had left her free and in possession of great wealth. The first nobles of the republic were her suitors, but she answered the efforts they made to please her with but disdainful indifference. In a word, her lofty and almost savage character had, so to speak, become a proverb. Pippo was therefore doubly surprised, for if, on the one side, he had never supposed that his mysterious conquest was Beatrice Donato, on the other, it seemed to him, on looking at her, that he saw her for the first time, so different was she from herself. Love, which can give charms to the most vulgar face, at this moment was showing her omnipotence in thus embellishing one of nature's masterpieces.

After a few moments of silence, Pippo approached his lady and took her hand. He tried to picture to her his surprise and to thank her for his happiness, but she did not answer and did not appear to be listening. She remained immovable and seemed to distinguish nothing, as if all that surrounded her had been a dream. He spoke to her for a long time, without her making a single movement; nevertheless, he placed his arm round Beatrice's waist and sat down near her.

"You sent me yesterday," said he to her, "a kiss on a rose. Allow me to return what I

have received, on a more beautiful and fresher flower."

While talking thus he kissed her on the lips. She made no effort to stop him, but her looks, which appeared to be wandering, suddenly became fixed on Pippo. She softly pushed him away, and shaking her head with a sadness full of grace, she said:

"You will not love me, but will only treat me as a fancy. But I love you and I wish, first of all, to kneel before you." And in fact she did bend before him. Pippo vainly held her, begging her to rise, but she slipped through his arms and knelt on the floor.

It is not usual nor even agreeable to see a woman take this humble position. Although it is a mark of love, it seems to exclusively belong to man. It is a penitent attitude that one can not see without emotion, and which has sometimes exacted, from a judge, pardon for the guilty. Pippo watched with growing surprise the admirable spectacle before him. If he had been seized with respect on seeing Beatrice, what must he have felt on seeing her at his feet? The widow of Donato, the daughter of Loredano, was on her knees. Her velvet robe, embroidered with silver flowers, covered the flagstones; her veil and her hair undone were trailing on the ground. In this beautiful frame there appeared her white shoulders and her joined hands, while her wet

eyes were raised to Pippo. Moved to the depths of his heart, he retreated a step or two and felt intoxicated with pride. He was not noble and the patrician haughtiness that Beatrice threw off, passed like a flash of lightning through the young man's heart.

But this flash lasted only for a second and rapidly vanished. Such a sight is bound to produce more than a feeling of vanity. When we bend over a limpid spring our image immediately appears and our approach brings to life a brother who, at the bottom of the water, comes before us. So, in the human soul, love calls love and gives it birth with a look. Pippo also fell on his knees. In this position, one before the other, they both remained for a few moments, exchanging their first kisses.

If Beatrice was a daughter of the Loredanos, the gentle blood of her mother, Bianca Contarini, also flowed in her veins. Never was there a better creature in the world than this mother, who was also one of the beauties of Venice. Always happy and pleasant, thinking only of living in peace, but in times of war loving her country, Bianca seemed the elder sister of her daughters. She died young, and dead, was still beautiful.

It was through her that Beatrice had learned to understand and to love art, and especially painting. Not that the young widow became very learned on this subject. She had been to

Rome and to Florence and the masterpieces of Michelangelo had only inspired her with curiosity. As a Roman, she loved Raphael; but as a daughter of the Adriatic, she preferred Titian. While all around her every one was busy with the intrigues of the court or the affairs of the republic, she was bothered only about new pictures and as to what her favorite art would become after the death of old Vecellio. She had seen in the Dolfino Palace the picture of which I spoke at the beginning of this story, the only one that Tizianello had painted, and which had perished in a fire. After having admired this canvas, she had met Pippo at the Signora Dorothée's and had been seized with an irresistible love for him.

Painting in the time of Julius II. and Leo X. was not a business as it is to-day. It was a religion for the artists, an enlightened taste for the great nobles, a glory for Italy, and a passion for women. When a pope left the Vatican to visit Buonarotti, the daughter of a Venetian noble could love Tizianello without shame. But Beatrice had conceived an idea that elevated and emboldened her passion. She wished to make of Pippo more than her lover; she wished to make of him a great painter. She knew the dissipated life he led and had resolved to draw him away from it. She knew that in him, despite his follies, the sacred fire of Art was not dead but merely

covered with cinders and she hoped that love might revive the divine spark. She had hesitated for a whole year, cherishing this idea in secret, meeting Pippo from time to time and looking at his windows when she passed along the quay. A whim had led her on: she had been unable to resist the temptation to embroider a purse and send it to him. She had promised herself, it is true, to go no further and never to attempt more. But when the Signora Dorothée had shown her the verses that Pippo had written for her, she had wept tears of joy. She was aware of the risk she was taking in trying to realize her dream, but it was the dream of a woman, and she had said on leaving her house—"What a woman wishes, God wills."

Led and sustained by this thought, by her love and by her sincerity, she felt herself under the shelter of her fear. In kneeling before Pippo, she had just made her first prayer to love, but after the sacrifice of her pride, the impatient god asked of her another. She hesitated no more about becoming the mistress of Tizianello than if she had been his wife.

She removed her veil and placed it on a statue of Venus that was in the room; then, as beautiful and as pale as the marble goddess, she abandoned herself to Fate.

She spent the day with Pippo, as had been arranged. At sunset the gondola that had brought

her came to take her away. She left as secretly as she had entered. The servants had been sent off, under various pretexts, and the porter alone remained in the house. Accustomed to his master's manner of life, he was not surprised to see a masked woman cross the gallery with Pippo. But when he saw the lady, on nearing the door, lift her mask and Pippo give her a last kiss, he noiselessly advanced and listened.

"Had you never noticed me?" Beatrice was gaily asking.

"Yes," answered Pippo, "but I did not know your face. You yourself, I am sure, do not doubt your beauty."

"Nor you either. You are as beautiful as day, a thousand times more so than I thought. Shall you love me?"

"Yes, and for a long time."

"And I always."

With these words they separated and Pippo remained on the step, following with his eyes the gondola that was carrying Beatrice Donato.

CHAPTER VI

Two weeks had passed and Beatrice had not yet spoken of the project she had formed. To tell the truth, she had somewhat forgotten it herself. The first days of an amorous union are like

the voyages of the Spaniards when they discovered the new world. On embarking, they promised their government to follow precise instructions, to bring back maps, and to civilize America. But hardly had they arrived when the sight of an unknown sky, a virgin forest, a mine of gold or silver made them lose their memory. To run after a novelty, they forgot their promises and the whole of Europe, but they happened to discover a treasure: and thus will lovers sometimes act.

Still another reason gave Beatrice an excuse. During these two weeks Pippo had not gambled and had not once gone to the Comtesse Orsini's. It was the beginning of wisdom. At least Beatrice thought so, and I do not know if she was right or wrong. Pippo passed half the day with his mistress and the other half in watching the sea and in drinking the wine of Samos in an alehouse of the Lido. His friends no longer saw him. He had altered all his habits and worried neither about time, the hour of day, nor his actions.

In a word, he was enthused with the deep forgetfulness of all things which the first kisses of a beautiful woman always leave behind them, and can you say of a man, in such a case, that he was wise or foolish?

To make use of a word which expresses it all, Pippo and Beatrice were made for each other.

They had noticed it since the first day, but still they wanted time to be convinced of it, and for that a month was not too long. So a month went by without a word about painting. On the other hand, love, music on the water and walks outside the city were much indulged in. Great ladies sometimes prefer a secret pleasure party at an inn in the suburbs, to a small supper in a boudoir. Beatrice was of this opinion, and she preferred a fresh fish eaten tête-à-tête with Pippo under the arbors of Quintavalle, to even the dinners of the Doge. The meal over, they would get into a gondola and go wandering around the Island of the Armenians. It is there, between the city and the Lido, between the sky and the sea, that I advise the reader to go, on a fine moonlight night, and make love to the ladies of Venice.

At the end of a month, one day when Beatrice had secretly come to Pippo, she found him happier than usual. When she entered, he had just breakfasted and was walking up and down, singing. The sun lit up his room and caused a silver dish full of sequins to glisten. He had gambled the previous night and had won fifteen hundred piasters from Ser Vespasiano. With this sum he had purchased a Chinese fan, perfumed gloves, and a gold chain made in Venice and wonderfully chased. He placed these all in a cedar box encrusted with mother-of-pearl, which he offered to Beatrice.

At first she received his present with pleasure. But soon after, when she had learned that it came from money won by gambling, she no longer wished to accept it. Instead of joining in Pippo's cheerfulness, she fell to dreaming. Perhaps she thought he already loved her less, since he had gone back to his old pleasures. However that may be, she saw that the moment had come for speaking, and for attempting to make him give up the bad habits into which he was again to fall.

It was a difficult undertaking. In a month she had been able to fathom Pippo's character. He was, it is true, extremely lazy as regards ordinary events of life, and he practised the *Then she appeared before him* [illegible] more important things it was not easy to master him, on account of this very oddness. For as soon as persons wished to master him, instead of struggling and disputing, he let them speak their mind and none the less had his own way. To accomplish her purpose, Beatrice asked him if he would paint her portrait.

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He consented without demur. The next day he bought a canvas, and had brought into his room a fine easel of carved oak which had belonged to his father. Beatrice came in the morning, clothed in an ample brown gown, which she removed when Pippo was ready to start work. Then she appeared before him in a costume almost identical with that in which Paris Bordone

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It was a difficult undertaking. In a month she had been able to fathom Pippo's character. He was, it is true, extremely lazy as regards ordinary events of life, and he practised the *far niente* with delight. But for more important things it was not easy to master him, on account of this very idleness. For as soon as persons wished to master him, instead of struggling and disputing, he let them speak their mind and none the less had his own way. To accomplish her purpose, Beatrice asked him if he would paint her portrait.

He consented without demur. The next day he bought a canvas, and had brought into his room a fine easel of carved oak which had belonged to his father. Beatrice came in the morning, clothed in an ample brown gown, which she removed when Pippo was ready to start work. Then she appeared before him in a costume almost identical with that in which Paris Bordone

had clothed his " Crowned Venus." Her hair, knotted in front and intermingled with pearls, fell over her arms and shoulders in long waving locks. A necklace of pearls which fell to her waist and was fastened in the middle of her bosom with a clasp of gold, followed and set off the perfect outline of her naked form. Her dress of variable taffeta, blue and pink, was held up at the knee by a ruby clasp, leaving uncovered a leg as polished as marble. She also wore rich bracelets and slippers of scarlet velvet, laced with gold.

The " Venus " of Bordone is, as is well known, nothing but the portrait of a Venetian lady; and this painter, pupil of Titian, had a great reputation in Italy. But Beatrice, who possibly knew the model, well knew that she was possessed of far greater beauty. She wished to excite Pippo's emulation and she pointed out to him that in this way he could surpass Bordone. " By the blood of Diana! " cried the young man when he had examined her for some time, " the ' Crowned Venus ' is but an oyster-woman from the Arsenal disguised as a goddess; but behold the mother of love and the mistress of the God of Battle! "

It is easy to believe that his first care, on seeing such a beautiful model, was not to begin painting. For a moment Beatrice thought she was too beautiful and had not set about her projects of reform in a manner at all likely to succeed. However, the portrait was begun, but was

sketched by a heedless hand. By chance Pippo's brush fell. Beatrice picked it up, and on returning it to her lover, said to him: "Your father's brush one day fell from his hand in like manner. Charles V. picked it up and returned it to him. I wish to do as Cæsar did, although I am no empress."

Pippo had always felt for his father the greatest affection and admiration, and never spoke of him but with respect. This reminder impressed him. He rose and opened a cupboard. "There is the paint-brush of which you speak," said he to Beatrice while pointing it out. "My poor father kept it like a relic, ever since the master of half the world had touched it."

"Were you present at this scene," asked Beatrice, "and could you tell me all about it?"

"I was very young," answered Pippo, "but I remember. It was at Bologna. There had been an interview between the Pope and the Emperor. It was a question of the Duchy of Florence, or rather of the destiny of Italy. Paul III. and Charles V. had been talking on a terrace, and during their conversation the entire town was still. At the end of an hour everything was settled. A great sound of men and horses succeeded the silence. They were ignorant of what had happened and anxious to find out, but the deepest secrecy had been enjoined. It was with curiosity and terror that the inhabitants

watched pass even the smallest officer of the two courts. The dismemberment of Italy, exiles and new principalities were all hinted at. My father was working on a large picture and was at the top of a ladder which he used for painting, when some halberdiers, pike in hand, entered and ranged themselves against the wall. A page entered and cried in a loud voice, 'Cæsar!' A few minutes after, the Emperor appeared in his stiff doublet and smiling through his red beard. My father, surprised and charmed at this unexpected visit, came down from his ladder as quickly as he could. He was old, and upon leaning on the rail, he let fall his paint-brush. Every one remained motionless, for the presence of the Emperor had turned us into statues. My father became confused at his slowness and awkwardness, but feared to fall should he hurry. Charles V. took a few steps forward, bent slowly and picked up the paint-brush. 'Titian,' said he, in a clear and imperious voice, 'Titian well deserves to be waited on by Cæsar.' And with a majesty really unequaled, he returned the brush to my father, who knelt to receive it."

After this story, which Pippo was unable to tell without emotion, Beatrice remained silent for some time. She bent her head and appeared so absorbed that he asked her of what she was thinking.

"I am thinking of one thing," she answered.

" Charles V. is dead now, and his son is King of Spain. What would be thought of Phillip, if instead of carrying his father's sword, he allowed it to rust in an armory? "

Pippo smiled, and although he had understood Beatrice's thoughts, he asked her what she meant.

" I mean to say," she answered, " that you, also, are a king's son, for Bordone, Moretto and Romanino are good painters; Tintoretto and Giorgione were artists; but Titian was a king— and who now wields his scepter? "

" My brother Orazio," answered Pippo, " would have been a great painter, had he lived."

" Without doubt," answered Beatrice, " and this is what will be said of the sons of Titian: ' One could have been great had he lived, and the other, if he had wished.' "

" Do you think so? " said Pippo, laughing. " Well, they will surely add: ' But he preferred going about in a gondola with Beatrice Donato.' "

As it was a different answer Beatrice had hoped for, she was rather disconcerted. However, she did not lose courage but spoke more seriously.

" Listen to me," said she, " and do not laugh. The only picture you have painted has been admired. There is no one who does not regret its loss, but the life you lead is something worse

than the burning of the Dolfino Palace, for it is consuming you yourself. You think of nothing but enjoying yourself and do not reflect that what is for others but an amusement is a shame to you. The son of a rich merchant can play with the dice, but not Tizianello. Of what use is it that you know as much as our oldest painters and that you possess the youth they lack? You have only to try to succeed, and you will not try. Your friends deceive you, but I do my duty in telling you that you disgrace your father's name; and who will tell you, if not myself? So long as you are rich, you will find people to assist in your ruin. So long as you are good-looking, women will love you. But what will happen if you are not told the truth while still young? I am your mistress, my Lord, but I wish also to be your lover. Would to God you had been born poor! If you love me, you must work. In a district far from the town, I have discovered a small unpretentious house, with but one floor. We will furnish it, if you wish, to our taste and we will have two keys: one shall be for you, and I will keep the other. There we need fear no one and shall be free. You shall have an easel brought there, and if you will promise to work just two hours a day, I will come and see you there every day. Have you enough patience for this? If you agree, a year hence you will probably no longer love me, but you

will have become accustomed to working and there will be one more famous name for Italy. If you refuse, I can not cease loving you, but it will show you do not love me."

While Beatrice was talking she trembled. She feared to offend her lover, yet she had taken upon herself to speak unreservedly. This fear and the desire to please caused her eyes to sparkle. She no longer resembled Venus but a Muse.

Pippo did not answer immediately. He found her so beautiful that he left her some time in doubt. To tell the truth, he had paid less attention to her remonstrances than to the tone in which they had been pronounced; but this penetrating voice had charmed him. Beatrice had spoken with all her soul, in the purest Tuscan and with Venetian gentleness. When a lively *arietta* proceeds from a beautiful mouth, we do not take much notice of the words. It is sometimes even more agreeable not to hear them too distinctly, and to allow ourselves to be carried away by the music alone. This was just about what Pippo did. Without thinking of what was being demanded of him, he approached Beatrice, kissed her on the forehead, and said:

"Anything you wish, for you are as beautiful as an angel."

It was arranged that from that day Pippo would work regularly. Beatrice wished him to

put it in writing. She produced her tablets and writing a few lines with loving pride, said:

"You know that we Loredanos, we keep strict accounts:* I put you down as my debtor for two hours of work every day for a year. Sign and pay me as you should, so that I may know you love me."

Pippo willingly signed. "But it is well understood," said he, "that I shall begin by painting your portrait."

Beatrice kissed him and whispered in his ear, "And I also will make your portrait, a fine portrait, exactly like you, not inanimate, but alive."

CHAPTER VII

THE love of Pippo and Beatrice could at first be compared to a spring escaping from the ground. It now resembled a stream trickling away, little by little, and cutting out a bed for itself in the sand.

* When Foscari was tried, Jacques Loredanos, son of Pierre, thought, or believed he thought, it his duty to avenge the losses of his family. In his books (for he was in business, like almost all the patricians at this time) he had entered in his own writing the name of the Doge as a debtor—"for the death," so it read, "of my father and my uncle." On the other side of the register he had left a blank page whereon to inscribe the payment of this debt, and, in fact, after the loss of the Doge, he wrote *L'ha pagata*—"he has paid."—(*Darn. History of the Republic of Venice.*)

Had Pippo been of noble birth, he would certainly have married Beatrice. For the better they became acquainted, the more they loved each other. But, although the Vecelli were a good family from Cador, in Frioul, such a union was not possible. Not only would Beatrice's nearest relatives have opposed it, but all in Venice who bore patrician names would have been indignant. Those who most willingly tolerated intrigues of love, and who found nothing to blame in the fact that a noble lady was the mistress of a painter, would never have forgiven that same woman, had she married her lover. Such were the ideas of this epoch, which perhaps were less objectionable than our own.

The small house was furnished. Pippo kept his word and went there every day. To say that he worked would be too much, but he made pretense of so doing, or rather he thought he was working. Beatrice, on her side, went farther than her promise, for she always arrived first. The portrait was sketched; it progressed slowly, but was on the easel, and although it was hardly touched most of the time, at least it acted as a witness, to encourage love or maybe to excuse idleness.

Every morning Beatrice sent her negress to her lover with a bouquet, so that he should become accustomed to rising early. "A painter should be awake at dawn," said she; "the light

of the sun is his life and the true element of his art, since he can do nothing without it."

This admonition appeared just, in Pippo's eyes, but to follow it was difficult. He would place the bouquet in the glass of sweetened water which he had on his table and fall asleep again. When, on his way to the little house, he passed under the windows of the Comtesse Orsini, it seemed to him as if his money was uneasy in his pocket. One day, when out for a walk, he met Ser Vespasiano, who asked why they no longer saw him.

"I have taken an oath never to hold a dicebox again," he answered, "and never to touch a card. But, since you are here, let us play heads or tails with what money we have with us."

Ser Vespasiano, who, although an old man, and a lawyer, was none the less passionately fond of play, and took good care not to refuse this proposal. He threw a piastre in the air, lost thirty sequins, and went away little satisfied. "What a pity," thought Pippo, "not to play just now! I am sure that Beatrice's purse would continue to bring me luck, and that in eight days I should regain what I have lost during the last two years."

But it was with great pleasure that he obeyed his mistress. His little studio appeared alike most gay and most peaceful. It was as if he was in a new world, of which, nevertheless, he had a

faint remembrance, for his canvas and his easel recalled the days of his infancy. Things that were once familiar soon become so again, and this facility, added to the remembrance, endear them to us without our knowing why. When Pippo took his palette one fine morning and squeezed out his paints on it; when he saw them arranged in order and ready to mix under the guidance of his hand, he seemed to hear behind him the hoarse voice of his father crying, as of old, "Now then, lazybones, what are you dreaming of? Get bravely to work!" At this thought, he turned his head, but instead of the severe countenance of Titian, he saw Beatrice, her arms and bosom bare, her forehead crowned with pearls, preparing to pose for him, and laughingly remarking, "When you are pleased to be ready, my lord."

You must not think he was indifferent to the advice she gave him, and of this she was not sparing. Sometimes she would speak to him of the Venetian masters and of the glorious place they held in the schools of Italy. Sometimes, after having reminded him to what a height art had risen, she would point out its decadence. She was only too correct on this subject, for Venice was then doing what Florence had done before. She was losing not only her glory, but the respect for glory. Michelangelo and Titian had both lived almost a century. After having taught

their country art, they had struggled against disorder as long as was possible for human force; but these two old columns had, at length, crumbled. In instructing obscure amateurs in the crude, the masters, hardly buried, were forgotten.

Brescia and Cremona opened new schools, and proclaimed them superior to the old ones. Even in Venice, the son of one of Titian's pupils, usurping the nickname given to Pippo, like him, had himself styled Tizianello, and was filling the patriarchal church with works of the worst taste.

Although Pippo did not trouble about his country's shame, he could not help being annoyed at this scandal. When an inferior painting was praised before him, or when he found a poor picture in some church in the midst of his father's masterpieces, he felt the same displeasure that a patrician might have experienced on seeing the name of a bastard inscribed in the book of gold. Beatrice understood this dislike, and women have all, in a more or less degree, the instinct of Delilah. They know when to fathom the secret of Samson's hair. While respecting sacred names, Beatrice took care, from time to time, to praise the work of some mediocre artist. It was not easy for her to contradict herself in this way, but she very cleverly gave this false praise an appearance of truth. In this way, she often aroused Pippo's bad temper, and she noticed

that on these occasions he set to work with extraordinary vivacity. He would have the boldness of a master and impatience inspired him. But his frivolous character soon resumed its sway and he would suddenly throw his paint brush down.

"Let us drink a glass of Cyprian wine," he would say, "and speak no more of this nonsense."

Such an inconstant spirit might, perhaps, have discouraged any one else but Beatrice. But, since we find in history stories of the most lasting hate, we must not be astonished if love can inspire perseverance. Beatrice was persuaded that the saying, "Habit can do anything," was true, and this is whence she obtained this conviction. She had seen her father, a man extremely wealthy, and in poor health, undertake the most arduous tasks and the driest calculations in his old age, in order to add a few sequins to his immense fortune. She had often begged him to spare himself, but he had always given her the same answer, that it was a habit of his since his childhood, which had become necessary to him and which he would keep as long as he lived. Taught by this example, Beatrice did not wish to forejudge anything so long as Pippo did not bind himself to regular work, and she told herself that the love of glory is a noble ambition which should be as strong as avarice.

In thinking thus, she was not mistaken. But the difficulty consisted in this, that to get Pippo into a good habit it was necessary to remove a bad one. Now there are noxious weeds which can be torn up with little effort, but gambling is not like one of these. Perhaps, even, it may be the only passion that can resist love, for you may see men of ambition, libertines, and even men of religion, yield to a woman's wish, but rarely is this the case with gamblers, and the reason of this is easy to explain. As coined metal represents almost all pleasures, so does play carry with it almost all emotions. Each card, each throw of the dice, brings the loss or gain of a certain number of pieces of gold or silver, and each of these coins is the representative of an, as yet, unknown pleasure. So he who wins, feels a multitude of desires, and not only freely gives himself up to them, but tries to create new ones, having the certainty of being able to satisfy them. From this is derived the despair of he who loses, and suddenly finds himself incapable of playing, after having handled enormous sums. Such trials, often repeated, at the same time wound and exalt the spirit, throwing it into a kind of stupor. Ordinary sensations are too weak, they present themselves too slowly and too much in succession for the player, accustomed to concentrate his passions, to take the smallest interest in them.

Happily for Pippo, his father had left him too rich for loss or gain to be able to exercise such a baleful influence over him. Idleness, rather than vice, had tempted him. Besides, he was too young for the harm to be irremediable: the very inconsistency of his tastes proved this. So it was not impossible for him to correct himself, so long as one knew how to carefully guide him. This necessity had not escaped the notice of Beatrice, and without thinking of her own reputation, she spent almost every day with her lover. On the other hand, so that habit should not engender satiety, she brought in play all the resources of feminine coquetry. Her hair, her dress, even her language, incessantly varied, and for fear that Pippo might become disgusted with her, she changed her gown every day. Pippo noticed these little stratagems, but he was not so foolish as to resent them; on the contrary, he did the same himself; he altered his humor and his moods as often as he changed his collar. But he had no need to study for this; nature looked after it and he sometimes laughingly remarked, "A gudgeon is a little fish, and a whim is a small passion."

Living in this way and both fond of pleasure, our lovers understood each other perfectly. One thing alone troubled Beatrice. Every time she spoke to Pippo of the plans she was making for

the future, he was satisfied to reply, "Let us begin with your portrait."

"I ask nothing better," she would answer, "and this has been settled a long time. But what do you think of doing after that? This portrait can not be publicly exhibited and, as soon as it is finished, we must think of something that will make you better known. Have you some subject in your mind? Will it be an historical or a church scene?"

When she asked him these questions, he always found means of having some distraction that stopped him from hearing, as for example, picking up his handkerchief, arranging a button on his coat, or any other detail of a similar kind. She had begun by thinking that it might be an artist's mystery, and that he did not wish to divulge his plans. But no one was less secretive than he, nor more confiding, at least with his mistress, for there can be no love without trust. "Is it possible he will deceive me," Beatrice asked herself; "is this willingness but play, and has he no intention of keeping his word?"

When this doubt came to her mind, she assumed a grave and almost haughty look. "I have your promise," she would say, "you bound yourself for a year, and we shall see whether you are honorable." But before she could finish this sentence, Pippo would tenderly embrace her. "Let us begin by painting your portrait," he

would repeat. After which he knew how to set to work to make her speak on other subjects.

One may imagine she was anxious to see this portrait finished. At the end of six weeks, it was done. When she posed for the last sitting, Beatrice was so happy that she could not remain in position. She went to and fro from the painting to her armchair and she cried out both with admiration and with pleasure. Pippo worked slowly and, from time to time, shook his head. Suddenly he frowned, and bruskly passed over the picture the rag that served him to wipe his brushes on. At once, Beatrice ran over to him and saw that he had effaced the mouth and the eyes. She was in such consternation at this that she was unable to restrain her tears. But Pippo quietly replaced the colors in his box. "A look and a smile are two difficult things to reproduce," said he; "one must be inspired to dare to paint them. I do not feel my hand sure enough and do not even know if it ever will be."

So the portrait remained disfigured in this way and, every time Beatrice looked at this head without mouth and without eyes, she felt her anxiety redouble.

CHAPTER VIII

THE reader may have noticed that Pippo was fond of Greek wines. Now, although the wines of the East do not tend to animate after a good dinner, he chattered willingly during dessert. Beatrice never missed bringing the conversation round to painting, but as soon as this was mentioned, one of two things would happen. Either Pippo remained silent, and in this case he had a certain smile on his lips that Beatrice did not like, or he spoke of the arts with strange indifference and disdain. Odd thoughts, especially, occurred to him the greater part of the time during this conversation.

"There is a fine picture to be painted," said he. "It represents the Campo-Vaccino at Rome, at the setting of the sun. The horizon is vast, the square deserted. In the foreground are children playing in some ruins; in the background you see a young man passing enveloped in his mantle. His face is pale, his delicate features are wasted by suffering. On seeing him, you must be able to guess that he is about to die. In one hand he holds a palette and some paintbrushes, with the other he leans on a young and robust woman, who turns her head laughing. To explain this scene, the day on which this hap-

pened must be added at the bottom—Good Friday in the year 1520."

Beatrice easily understood the meaning of this enigma. It was on Good Friday in 1520 that Raphael died in Rome, and, although it had been attempted to deny the rumors that had been circulated, it was certain that this great man had expired in the arms of his mistress. So the picture that Pippo had in view would have represented Raphael but a few moments before his end, and, in fact, such a scene, treated simply by a true artist, might have been beautiful. But Beatrice knew what to think of this imaginary project and read in her lover's eyes that which he meant her to understand.

While every one in Italy agreed in lamenting this death, Pippo, on the contrary, was accustomed to praise it, and he often remarked, that in spite of all Raphael's genius, his death was more beautiful than his life. This thought was revolting to Beatrice, although she could not help smiling at it. It was to say that love is worth more than glory, and if such an idea can be censured by a woman, at least it can not offend her. If Pippo had chosen some other example, Beatrice might perhaps have been of his opinion.

"But why," she said, "oppose to each other two things which sympathize so well together? Love and glory are brother and sister. Why do you wish to tear them apart?"

"One can never do two things well at the same time," added Pippo. "You would not advise a business man to write poetry at the same time as his bills; nor a poet to measure cloth while he was thinking of a rhyme. Why then do you wish to make me paint when I am in love?"

Beatrice did not well know what to answer, for she dare not say that love was no occupation.

"Do you, then, wish to die like Raphael?" she demanded. "And, if you wish it, why not begin to act as he did?"

"On the contrary," answered Pippo, "it is from fear of dying like him that I do not wish to act as he did. Either Raphael, being a painter, was wrong in falling in love, or being in love was wrong to start to paint. That is why he died when thirty-seven years old, in a glorious way it is true, but there is no good way of dying. If he had produced only fifty masterpieces less, it would have been a blow for the Pope, who would have been obliged to have his chapels decorated by another. But La Fornarine would have received fifty more kisses, and Raphael would have escaped the smell of oil colors which is so injurious to the health."

"Would you then make of me a Fornarine?" cried Beatrice at this. "If you care neither for glory nor your life, do you wish me to bury you?"

"In truth, no," answered Pippo, carrying his glass to his lips: "if I could change you, I would make of you a Staphyle." *

Despite the careless tone he affected, Pippo, in thus expressing himself, was not jesting as much as one may think. Beneath his jests, he even hid a reasonable opinion, and here is what was at the bottom of his thoughts.

In the history of art, mention has often been made of the ease with which great painters have executed their works, and some have been cited who knew how to mingle with their work disorder and even idleness. But there is no greater mistake than that. It is not impossible that a practised painter, sure of his hand and reputation, may succeed in producing a beautiful sketch in the midst of distractions and pleasures. Vinci sometimes painted, it is said, holding his lyre in one hand and his brush in the other, but the celebrated portrait of La Joconde remained on his easel for four years. In spite of rare feats of strength, which in the result are always too highly praised, it is certain that that which is veritably beautiful is the work of time and meditation and that there is no true genius without patience.

Pippo was convinced of this rule and his father's example had confirmed him in his opin-

* A nymph with whom Bacchus was in love. He changed her into a bunch of grapes.

ion. In fact, there never lived a painter so bold as Titian, unless it be his pupil Rubens; but if Titian's hand was quick, his mind was patient. During the ninety-nine years of his life, he was constantly occupied with his art. At the beginning, he had commenced by painting with a minute timidity and a sharpness which made his works resemble those Gothic pictures of Albert Dürer. It was only after much work that he dared obey his genius and allow his brush to run away with him. Even then, he sometimes was sorry for it, and Michelangelo once said, on seeing one of Titian's canvases, that it was a pity the principles of drawing were neglected in Venice.

Now at the moment when what I am telling you was happening, a deplorable ease, which is always the first sign of the decay of art, was reigning in Venice. Pippo, upheld by the name he bore, with a little boldness and the studies he had made, could easily and quickly have made himself illustrious, but that was precisely what he did not wish. He would have looked upon it as shameful to profit by the ignorance of the vulgar. He told himself, with reason, that the son of an architect should not demolish that which his father had built, and that, if the son of Titian became a painter, it was his duty to oppose himself to the decay of painting.

But to undertake such a task, it was, without

doubt, necessary for him to devote his entire life to it. Would he succeed? It was uncertain. A single man has little strength when a whole century is fighting against him. He is carried away by the multitude like a swimmer by a whirlpool. What then would happen? Pippo did not disguise anything from himself: he knew that courage would fail him sooner or later and that his old pleasures would once more carry him away, so that he ran the chance of making a useless sacrifice, whether this sacrifice be complete or only partial. And what would it benefit him? He was young, rich, healthy and he had a beautiful mistress. To live happily without any one reproaching him, it was necessary but to allow the sun to rise and set. Should he give up so much for a doubtful glory, which would probably escape him?

It was after having carefully thought it over that Pippo had decided to assume an indifference, which, little by little, became natural. "If I study for another twenty years," he would say, "and attempt to imitate my father, I shall be singing to the deaf. If strength fails me, I shall dishonor my name."

And, with his usual good spirits, he concluded by crying out, "To the Devil with painting! Life is too short."

While he was disputing with Beatrice, the portrait still remained unfinished. Pippo, by

chance, entered the Convent of the Servites one day. On a scaffolding erected in a chapel, he perceived the son of Marco Vecellio, even he, who I have already informed you, had himself nicknamed Tizianello. This young man had no reasonable excuse for using this name, unless he was a distant relative of Titian and that his Christian name was Tito, which he had altered to Titian, and from Titian to Tizianello. On this account, the idlers of Venice believed he had inherited the genius of the great painter and were in ecstasies before his pictures. Pippo had never disturbed himself about this ridiculous imposition, but at this moment, perhaps because he was annoyed at finding himself before this person, or perhaps because he was thinking of his amour propre more seriously than was usual, he approached the scaffolding which was held in place by small beams badly stayed. He kicked one of these beams and caused it to fall. Luckily the scaffolding did not give way at the same time, but it swayed so much that the so-called Tizianello at first staggered, as though drunk, and finished by losing his balance and falling among his colors which streaked him all over in the most curious manner.

You may imagine his anger on getting up. He immediately descended from his scaffold and advanced toward Pippo, threatening him. A priest threw himself between them to separate

them at the moment when they were about to draw their swords in the sacred place. The frightened worshipers fled, making the sign of the cross, while the curious hurried to the scene. Tito cried out loudly that a man had attempted to assassinate him and that he demanded justice for the crime. The beam, still out of place, was witness to it. The assistants began to murmur, and one of them, bolder than the rest, tried to seize Pippo by the collar. Pippo, who had acted only out of thoughtlessness and who looked on laughing, seeing himself on the point of being carried to prison and hearing himself called an assassin, in his turn, became angry. After having roughly pushed aside him who wished to arrest him, he rushed at Tito.

"It is you," he cried, seizing him, "it is you who should be seized by the collar and taken to Saint Mark's Square, there to be hung as a robber. Do you know to whom you are speaking, you thief of names? I am Pomponio Vecellio, son of Titian. Just now, I kicked your worm-eaten scaffolding: but, if my father had been in my place, you may be sure that, to teach you to call yourself Tizianello, he would have shaken you so well in your tree that you would have fallen like a rotten apple. But he would not have stopped at that. To treat you as you deserve, he would have taken you by the ear, insolent schoolboy, and brought you back to the

studio from which you escaped before knowing how to draw a head. By what right do you defile the walls of this convent and sign your miserable frescos in my name? Go and learn anatomy and copy the nude for ten years, as I did with my father, and we will then see who you are and if you have a signature. But, till then, be careful not to use that which belongs to me, or I will throw you in the canal, to baptize you once for all!"

With these words, Pippo left the church. As soon as the crowd heard his name it immediately calmed down. The people made way for him to pass and followed him with curiosity. He rushed off to the little house, where he found Beatrice waiting for him. Without wasting time to tell what had happened, he seized his palette, and, still moved with anger, he started working at the portrait.

In less than an hour, he finished it. At the same time, he made great alterations. First, he removed several details which he found too minute; he spread out the drapery with more liberality, retouched the background and accessories, which form a very important part of Venetian pictures; he then came to the mouth and the eyes, and succeeded, with a few strokes of his brush, in giving them a perfect expression. Her glance was sweet and proud; the lips, above which appeared a light down, were half open;

the teeth shone like pearls and words seemed about to come forth.

"You shall not be named the Crowned Venus," said he when all was finished, "but Venus in Love."

One may guess the joy of Beatrice. While Pippo was working, she had hardly dared to breathe. She kissed him and thanked him a hundred times and told him that in future she no longer wished to call him Tizianello, but Titian. During the remainder of the day, she spoke of nothing but the innumerable points of beauty she discovered every moment in her portrait. Not only did she regret that it could not be exhibited, but she was ready to ask for it to be. They passed the evening at the Quintaville and never had the two lovers been so gay and so happy. Pippo himself was childishly happy. It was only as late in the evening as possible, after a thousand protestations of love, that Beatrice decided to leave him for a few hours.

She did not sleep that night. The most laughable ideas and the sweetest hopes agitated her. She already saw her dreams realized, her lover praised and envied by all Italy and Venice owing him a new glory. The next day, as usual, she was first at the rendezvous and she began, while waiting for Pippo, by looking at her beloved portrait. The background of this portrait was a country scene, and in the foreground was a rock.

On this rock, Beatrice noticed some lines traced with cinnabar. She anxiously bent over to read them. In very fine Gothic letters the following sonnet was written:

In these poor lines behold the richest Queen
Since Beauty made her so: the rose upon
Her cheek is redder than an April dawn
And sweeter than e'er flamed in bushes green
Or lit the path of Love. No Sweet-sixteen
Is half so bravely timid. World, pass on!
She will remain, these youthful nations gone
The hallowed Vision of this ravished scene.

Know this, O world of careless lovers, know
That I, awake or sleeping, had e'er dreamed
Of reputation and of babbling fame;
Yet for my Model's kiss could but forego
Ambition's goal, a prize that heaven seemed,
And so to win a heart did lose a name!

Whatever effort Beatrice made after this, she never persuaded her lover to work again. He was inflexible to all her prayers, and, when she pressed him too hotly, he recited his sonnet. Thus he remained till his death, faithful to his idleness: and Beatrice, it is said, was so to his love. They lived long as man and wife, and it is to be regretted that the pride of the Loredanos, wounded by this public liaison, destroyed the portrait of Beatrice, just as chance had destroyed Tizianello's first picture.*

* It is due to the researches of a celebrated amateur, M. Doglioni, that we know that this painting existed.

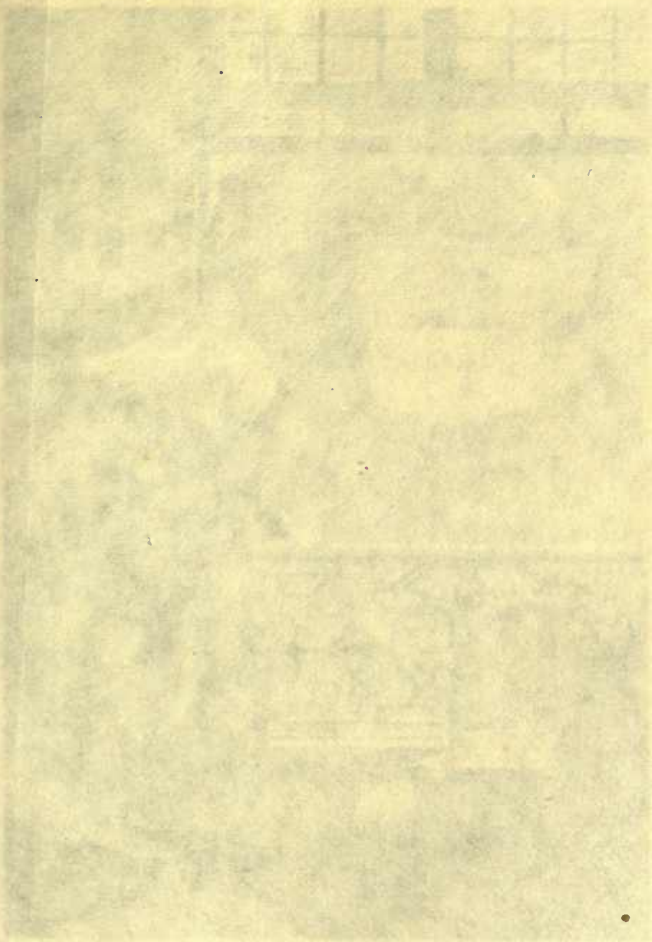
FREDERIC AND BERNERETTE

CHAPTER I

TOWARD the close of the Restoration, a young man from Besançon, Frederic Hombert by name, came to Paris to study law. His family was not rich and made him only a modest allowance. But as he was very careful, a little was sufficient. He roomed in the Latin quarter so as to be near his work. His tastes and inclinations were so sedentary that he hardly ever visited the promenades, the squares and the monuments, which, in Paris, are the chief objects of curiosity to the stranger. The society of some young men with whom he was thrown in contact at the Law School and a few houses whose doors had been opened to him by letters of introduction, were his only distractions. He kept up a regular correspondence with his parents and sent them word of his success in examinations as he passed them. After having worked assiduously for three years, at length, the time arrived for him to become an advocate. He had only to write his thesis, and had already fixed the time for his return to Besançon, when an unexpected event for a time disturbed his plans.

He lived in the Rue de la Harpe, on the third floor, and on his window sill were some flowers which he looked after carefully. While watering them one morning, at a window opposite him, he noticed a young girl who began to laugh. She watched him so gaily and openly that he could not help nodding his head. She graciously returned his salutation, and from this moment they became accustomed to wish each other "good morning" every day from one side of the street to the other. One day, when Frederic had risen earlier than usual, after having saluted his neighbor, he took a sheet of paper which he folded in the form of a letter and showed it to the girl, as if to ask if he could write to her. But she shook her head as a sign of refusal and disappeared as though offended.

The next day he chanced to meet her in the street. The young lady was returning home, accompanied by a young man whom Frederic did not know and whom he could not remember ever having seen among the students. From the appearance and dress of his neighbor, in spite of the fact that she had on a hat, he judged her to be what is known in Paris as a grisette. Her cavalier, of about his own age, was no doubt a brother or a lover, and in all probability the latter. Whichever it was, Frederic resolved to think no more of the matter. Winter having set in, he removed his flowers from the place they



JE VOUS AIME!!!

[illegible] in the window. But, in spite of him-[illegible] could not help looking out from time to [illegible] He brought the desk, at which he worked, [illegible] to the window and arranged the curtains [illegible] he could see without being himself per-[illegible]d.

His neighbor no longer [illegible] She was sometimes [illegible] at five o'clock in the [illegible] the lamp. [illegible] send her a kiss one day. [illegible] see her return it as [illegible] before [illegible]rned his first [illegible] took up the [illegible] folded on [illegible] table and, [illegible] as he [illegible]ld, asked her [illegible] to receive [illegible]ote from him. [illegible] was not more [illegible]orable than the [illegible] again [illegible]ok her head and [illegible] happened for [illegible]ght days. [illegible] though, but as [illegible] letters, he had [illegible]

At the end of a [illegible] vexed at these [illegible]eated refusals, [illegible] before his [illegible]ghbor's eyes. At first she laughed, remained [illegible] some time [illegible] then drew from [illegible] pocket of her [illegible] a letter which she showed [illegible] the student. You may well understand that [illegible] did not shake his head. Unable to speak, he [illegible]te in big letters on a large sheet of drawing-[illegible]er these three words: "I adore you." Then

"I adore you!"

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"I adore you!"

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occupied in the window. But, in spite of himself, he could not help looking out from time to time. He brought the desk, at which he worked, nearer to the window and arranged the curtains so that he could see without being himself perceived.

His neighbor no longer appeared in the morning. She was sometimes to be seen shutting the blinds at five o'clock in the evening after having lighted the lamp. Frederic made bold enough to send her a kiss one day. He was surprised to see her return it as gaily as she had before returned his first salute. He again took up the piece of paper which had remained folded on his table and, explaining by signs as well as he could, asked her to write to him or to receive a note from him. But the reply was not more favorable than the first time. The grisette again shook her head and the same thing happened for eight days. Kisses came readily enough, but as for letters, he had to give them up.

At the end of a week, Frederic, vexed at these repeated refusals, tore up the paper before his neighbor's eyes. At first she laughed, remained for some time undecided, and then drew from the pocket of her apron a letter which she showed to the student. You may well understand that he did not shake his head. Unable to speak, he wrote in big letters on a large sheet of drawing-paper these three words: "I adore you." Then

he placed the sheet on a chair and arranged a lighted candle on each side. The lovely grisette, with the aid of a lorgnette, was thus enabled to read her lover's first declaration. She answered with a smile and motioned to Frederic to go down and get the note she had shown him.

It was dark and a heavy mist was rising. The young man hurriedly descended, crossed the street, and entered his neighbor's house. The door was open and the young lady was at the foot of the stairs. Frederic, throwing his arms round her, was quicker to kiss her than to speak. She ran away trembling.

"What have you written to me?" he asked. "When and how can I see you again?"

She stopped, retraced her steps, and slipping her note into Frederic's hand replied:

"Here, take it, and do not pass your nights away from home."

The fact is, the student, in spite of his wisdom, had for some time, been spending his nights away from his lodgings and the grisette had noticed this.

When two lovers agree, obstacles count for little. The note handed to Frederic enjoined the greatest precaution, spoke of hidden danger, and asked where they could meet each other. It could not be, she said, in the young man's room. So they must find a room somewhere in the neighborhood. The Latin quarter is full of

them. The first meeting was arranged, when Frederic received the following letter:

"You say you adore me, but you do not say if you think me pretty. You have scarcely seen me and, to be able to love me, you must see me better. I am going out with my servant. You go out too and meet me in the road. You will approach me, as an acquaintance, say a few words and, during this time, look at me well. If you do not think me pretty, tell me so, and I shall not be angry. It is quite simple, and, besides, I am not so bad.

"A thousand kisses.

"BERNERETTE."

Frederic obeyed the orders of his mistress, and I need only say the result was satisfactory. Yet Bernerette, by a refinement of coquetry, instead of loading herself with all her finery for this meeting, appeared in negligee, her hair done up under her hat. The student saluted her respectfully, told her that he thought her more beautiful than ever, and then went home delighted with his new conquest. But she appeared still more beautiful the following day, when she came to the rendezvous, and here he saw that she could dispense with all finery and was equally as charming in the simplest costume.

CHAPTER II

FREDERIC and Bernerette had given way to their love almost before they had exchanged a single word and, from the very start, began to thee and thou each other. Wrapt in each other's arms they sat near the fireplace, where a small fire was burning. Here Bernerette, leaning on her lover's knees her cheeks aglow with pleasure, told him who she was. She had played in comedy in the provinces. Her real name was Louise Durand and Bernerette was but an assumed one. She had been living for two years with a young man whom she no longer loved. At all costs, she wished to get rid of him and change her mode of life, either by returning to the stage if she found some one to protect her, or by learning a trade. Apart from this, she said nothing about her family or the past. She simply announced her determination to break the bonds that held her and which were insupportable. Frederic did not wish to deceive her and told her exactly his position. Not being rich, and acquainted with few people, he could help her but little.

"As I can not support you," he added, "I did not wish, under any pretext, to cause a rupture. But, as I could not endure the thought of sharing you with another, I shall leave you, much

to my regret, and cherish in my heart the memory of a happy day."

At this unexpected declaration, Bernerette burst into tears. "Why go?" said she. "If I break with my lover, it is not you who will have been the cause, since I have made up my mind for some time. If I go and serve my apprenticeship in a laundry, will you no longer love me? It is a pity you are not rich, but what of it? We will do the best we can."

Frederic was about to reply, but a kiss checked him.

"Let us think no more about it, nor mention it," said Bernerette. "When you want me, signal to me from your window and do not bother about the rest, which in any case does not concern you."

During about six weeks, Frederic hardly worked at all. His theme lay on his table, hardly commenced, and, he added a line, from time to time. He knew that if a desire for enjoyment came to him, he had but to open the window. Bernerette was always ready and when he asked her how she managed to have so much liberty, she always answered that it was no business of his. He had a few savings in his drawer which he rapidly spent. At the end of two weeks, he was obliged to have recourse to a friend to enable him to take his mistress out to supper.

When this friend, who was named Gerard,

learned of Frederic's new mode of life he said to him: " Be careful, you are in love. Your grisette has nothing and you have not much more. In your position, I would be shy of an actress from the provinces. These passions lead to more than one would think."

Frederic laughingly replied that it was not a question of passion, but of a passing love. He told Gerard how he had come to know Bernerette, thanks to the window. " She is a girl who thinks of nothing but laughter," said he to his friend. " There is nothing less dangerous than she, and nothing less serious than our liaison."

Gerard yielded to this reasoning, but still urged Frederic to work. The latter assured him that his theme would soon be finished, and to prove it, in fact, he worked hard for a few hours; but, that very evening, Bernerette was awaiting him. They went together to *La Chaumière* and work was neglected.

La Chaumière is the Tivoli of the Latin quarter and the rendezvous of the students and grisettes. It follows, that it is a place for good company and a resort of pleasure. Drinking and dancing are indulged in: a frank gaiety, somewhat noisy, animates the assembly. The *Elegantes* are there in their round bonnets and the *Fashionables* in velvet waistcoats. One smokes, touches glasses in sign of friendship and makes love openly. If the police should forbid

the entrance to this garden of those on their rolls, it would perhaps be here only that the old life of the students of Paris might continue, that life so free and happy, the memories of which fade day by day.

Frederic, as a provincial, was not one to grumble at those he met there; and Bernerette, who only wished to enjoy herself, would not have noticed anything. One must have a certain knowledge of the world to be able to tell where to amuse one's self. Our happy couple did not reason over their pleasures. When they had danced all the evening, they went home tired and content. Frederic was such a novice that his first youthful follies appeared to him happiness itself. When Bernerette, leaning on his arm, walked with him down the Boulevard Neuf, he could imagine nothing sweeter than to live like this day by day. They wondered how it would all end, but neither could answer the question clearly. The rent of the furnished room near the Luxembourg was paid for two months: this was important. Sometimes, on arriving, Bernerette would have under her arm a cake wrapped up in paper and Frederic a bottle of good wine. They would then have a regular feast: the young girl at dessert would sing verses from the vaudevilles in which she had appeared. If she forgot the words, the student improvised verses in honor of his friend, and when he could not find

the rhyme, a kiss sufficed. And in this way, they passed the night together, without a thought of time.

"You no longer do anything," Gerard would say, "and your passing fancy will last longer than a genuine passion. Take care: you are spending money and you neglect the means of making any more."

"Reassure yourself," answered Frederic, "my theme is progressing and Bernerette is about to apprentice herself to a laundry. Let me enjoy a moment of happiness in peace, and do not worry about the future."

But the time for printing the thesis was rapidly drawing near. It was finished in haste but was no worse on that account. Frederic was admitted to the bar and sent to Besançon several copies of his dissertation, together with his diploma. His father answered the happy news by sending him a sum of money much more than sufficient for his return home. Paternal joy, in this way and without knowing it, came to the assistance of love. Frederic was able to repay his friend the money he had borrowed and to convince him of the uselessness of his remonstrances. He wished to make Bernerette a present, but she refused.

"Take me out to supper," said she to him; "all I want from you is yourself."

With a character gay as that of this young

girl, when she experienced the least trouble, it was easy to perceive. Frederic found her sad one day and asked her the reason. After some hesitation, she drew a letter from her pocket. "It is an anonymous letter," said she. "The young man who lives with me received it yesterday and gave it to me saying that he took no notice of accusations that were unsigned. Who has written this? I do not know. The spelling is as bad as the style, but it is no less dangerous for me. I am denounced as a lost woman and the very day and hour of our last meeting is mentioned. It must be some one in the house, a porter or a chambermaid. I do not know what to do nor how to escape the danger that threatens me."

"What danger?" demanded Frederic.

"I believe," said Bernerette, laughing, "that it is no less than a question of my life. I have to deal with a man of violent temper, and if he knew I deceived him, he would be quite capable of killing me."

In vain, Frederic read the letter a second time and examined it in a hundred different ways; he could not recognize the writing. He went home very much alarmed and resolved not to see Bernerette for a few days, but he soon received a note from her.

"He knows all," she wrote. "I do not know who has told him, but think it must be the porter.

He is coming to see you and wants to fight with you. I am unable to say anything else—I am more nearly dead than alive."

Frederic spent the entire day in his room. He awaited his rival's visit or at least some provocation. He was surprised to receive neither the one nor the other. The next day, and during the week, the same silence. At length, he learned that M. de N——, Bernerette's lover, had come to an understanding with her, after which, she had left the house and sought safety with her mother. Alone, and in despair over the loss of a mistress he had loved to distraction, the young man had gone out one morning and had not been heard from again. At the end of four days, not seeing him return, the door of his apartment had been forced. He had left a letter on the table announcing his fatal design. It was a week later that the remains of this unfortunate man were discovered in the forest of Meudon.

CHAPTER III

The impression the news of this suicide made on Frederic was profound. Although he did not know this young man, and had never spoken to him, he knew his name, which was that of an illustrious family. He saw his parents arrive, his brothers in sorrow, and he knew the sad details

of the search they had to make to find the body. The seals were affixed; soon after, the furniture was removed. The window, near which Bernerette had worked, remained open and now revealed only the walls of an empty room.

One does not feel remorse unless one is culpable, and Frederic had nothing serious with which to reproach himself, since he had deceived no one, and had never even clearly understood the state of affairs between the grisette and her lover. But he felt himself filled with horror at being the involuntary cause of such an unfortunate calamity. "Why did he not come and see me?" he said to himself. "Why did he not turn against me the weapon of which he made such terrible use? I do not know how I should have acted, nor what would have happened; but my heart tells me that such an occurrence would not have taken place. Why did I not know he loved her so much? Why was I not witness to his grief? Who knows? I should, perhaps, have gone away. I might have convinced him, cured him and brought him to reason by frank and friendly words. In any case, he would still be living, and I would rather he had broken my arm than to think that, while killing himself, he perhaps pronounced my name."

In the midst of these sad thoughts, he received a letter from Bernerette: she was ill and in bed. During his last interview with her, M. de N——

had struck her and she had sustained a serious fall. Frederic went to see her, but lacked courage. To keep her as his mistress, seemed like committing a murder. He decided to leave. After having settled his affairs he sent the poor girl what he could spare, promised not to abandon her if she were in need, and returned to Besançon.

The day of his arrival, as you may imagine, was quite a holiday. He was congratulated on his new title and overwhelmed with questions about his stay in Paris. His father proudly introduced him to all the people of note in the town. He was soon informed of a plan conceived in his absence. They had thought of his marriage and proposed a young and pretty girl of honorable fortune. He neither refused nor accepted: in his heart was a sadness that nothing could remove. He allowed himself to be led where they pleased, answered, as well as he could, those who questioned him and even forced himself to make love to his intended. But it was without pleasure and almost in spite of himself that he performed these duties. Not that Bernerette was dear enough to him to make him refuse an advantageous marriage, but the last events had produced too strong an effect on him to be so soon forgotten. In a heart troubled by memories there is no place for hope. These two feelings, in their extreme keenness, exclude each

other. It is only on losing their power that they become reconciled, and finish by intermingling.

The young lady in question was of a very melancholy disposition. She felt neither sympathy nor repugnance for Frederic. It was in her case, as in his, simply that she obeyed her parents' wishes. Thanks to the ease with which they could converse, they both learned the truth. They felt that love would not come to them, but friendship had come without any effort. One day, when the two united families had gone into the country, Frederic, on returning, gave his arm to his intended. She asked him if he had not left some object of his affections in Paris and he gave her his history. She began by finding it amusing and treating it as a mere nothing. Frederic spoke of it all as but a folly of small importance, but the finish of the story appeared serious to Mademoiselle Darcy, the young lady's name. "Good God," said she, "but it is very cruel! I understand what you must have felt and I think all the more of you. But you are not to blame; let time do its work. Your parents are just as anxious as mine to bring about our marriage; but leave yourself in my hands. I will spare you as much as possible and, in any case, the pain of a refusal."

With these words, they parted. Frederic suspected that Mademoiselle Darcy, on her side, had a confession to make. He was not mistaken.

She loved a young and penniless officer who had asked her hand and been rejected by the family. She, in her turn, was frank and Frederic swore that she should not regret it. They came to a tacit understanding to resist their parents, while appearing to submit to their wishes. They were incessantly seen together, dancing at the ball, chatting in the drawing-room, or walking alone. But, after having acted all day like two lovers, they shook hands in parting, and every night repeated that they would never marry.

Such situations are extremely dangerous. They possess a charm that leads one on and the heart yields with confidence. But love is a jealous god, who becomes irritated as soon as he is no longer feared, and one sometimes loves simply because one has promised not to love. After a time, Frederic recovered his spirits. He said to himself that, after all, it was not his fault that a slight intrigue had come to such a sinister ending, and that any other in his place would have acted as he did and, in fact, that one must forget what it is impossible to remedy. He began to find pleasure in seeing Mademoiselle Darcy every day: she appeared more beautiful than he had at first thought. He did not alter his conduct toward her, but, little by little, he put more warmth into his speech and protestations of love, a warmth which could not be mistaken. And the young lady was not deceived: her fem-

inine instinct promptly warned her of what was happening in Frederic's heart. She was flattered and almost touched; but, either because she was more constant than he, or because she wished to keep her word, she determined to entirely break with him and to remove all hope. For this, it was necessary that he should explain himself more clearly, and the occasion soon presented itself.

One night, when Frederic had seemed more ardent than usual, Mademoiselle Darcy, during tea, went and sat in a small adjoining room. A certain romantic disposition, often natural to women, invested her glance and words with an indescribable charm. Unconscious of her feelings, she was sensible of the power to produce a strong impression and yielded to the temptation to use that power, even though she were to suffer herself. Frederic had seen her go into the next room. He followed and approached her and, after a few words, regarding the sadness he noticed in her, said:

"Well, mademoiselle! Do you not think the day is approaching when you must make up your mind? Have you found any means of eluding this necessity? I have come to consult you on the matter. My father questions me incessantly and I hardly know what to reply. What objection can I make to this union, and how can I say I do not want you? If I pretend not to think

you beautiful enough, nor wise, nor gay, no one will believe me. I must, therefore, say I love another and the longer we wait the greater the falsehood in saying this. How could it be otherwise? Can I always see you with impunity? Can not the image of an absent one fade away when you are present? Tell me, then, what I must answer and what you think yourself. Have not your intentions changed? Will you allow your youth to consume itself in solitude? Will you remain faithful to a memory and will this memory suffice you? If I judge from my own experience, I must acknowledge that I do not believe it. For I feel that it is but deceiving oneself to resist the promptings of one's heart and a common destiny, which wishes us to forget and love. I will keep my word if you wish, but I can not help telling you that this obedience will be cruel. Know, then, that on you, alone, now depends our future: pronounce our fate."

"I am not surprised at what you tell me," answered Mademoiselle Darcy, "it is the language of all men. For them, the present is everything, and they would sacrifice their whole existence to the paying of a pretty compliment. Women also have similar temptations but the difference is that they resist them. I was wrong to leave myself in your hands and it is but just that I should pay the penalty. But while my re-

fusal may wound you and cause resentment toward me, you will learn from me something of which you will later admit the truth. It is that one loves but once in this life, that is, if one is capable of loving at all; those who are inconstant do not love: they play with the heart. I know that for a marriage, it is said that friendship suffices. In certain cases, this is possible, but how could it be possible for us, since you know I am in love with some one else? Supposing that today you abuse my confidence, in order to force me to marry you, what use will you make of this secret when I am your wife? Will it not be enough to make happiness impossible for both of us? I wish to believe that your Parisian love affair is only a youthful folly. Do you think that it has given me a good opinion of your heart, and that it is of no consequence to me, to know you to be of such a capricious character? Believe me, Frederic," she added, taking the young man by the hand, "believe me, you will one day fall in love, and on that day, if you think of me, you may perhaps hold in some esteem she who has dared to address you thus. You will then know what love really is."

With these words, Mademoiselle Darcy rose and left the room. She had noticed how troubled Frederic was and what an effect her words had produced: she left him very sad. The poor boy was too inexperienced to suppose that, in such

a formal declaration, there might be a trace of coquetry. He was not aware of the strange motives which sometimes govern a woman's actions. He did not know that she who wishes to refuse, will say merely, " No," and that she who explains more fully, in truth, wishes to be convinced.

However it may be, this conversation had the worst possible influence over him. Instead of attempting to persuade Mademoiselle Darcy, during the following days, he avoided being alone with her. Too proud to yield, she allowed him to remain away in silence.

He went to his father and spoke of the necessity of completing his preparations for admission to the bar. As to the marriage, it was Mademoiselle Darcy who first broached the subject. She did not dare to refuse absolutely, for fear of offending her family, but she asked for time to reflect, and persuaded them to leave her alone for a year. So, Frederic prepared to return to Paris. His allowance was slightly increased and he left Besançon feeling even more sad than when he arrived. The memory of his last conversation with Mademoiselle Darcy pursued him like a bad omen and, while the stage was carrying him away from his father's house in the country, he kept repeating to himself, " You will then know what love really is."

CHAPTER IV

He did not return to the Latin quarter. His profession led him to the Palais de Justice and he took a room near the Quai aux Fleurs. Hardly had he arrived, when he received a visit from his friend Gerard. During Frederic's absence, he had inherited considerable wealth. The death of an old uncle had made him rich. He had rooms in the Chaussée-d'Antin, a carriage and horses. He also kept a pretty mistress, received much company, and, in fact, lived a gay life at his house all day and often all night. He was seen at the balls, at all spectacles and on the promenades. In a word, from a modest student, had sprung a fashionable young man.

Without giving up his study, Frederic was drawn into the whirlpool that enveloped his friend. He soon learned to despise the pleasures of *La Chaumière:* this was no place for the gilded youth of Paris. They were often in worse company, but little matters; custom sanctions it and it was considered more noble to amuse oneself at *Musard's* with the bad company there than at the Boulevard Neuf with honest people. Gerard insisted on taking Frederic with him wherever he went. The latter resisted as much as he could, and finished by allowing himself to be led. He, thus, came to know a world of which he be-

fore was totally ignorant. He saw actresses and dancers and the society of these divinities has a great effect on a provincial. He mingled with gamblers and people who laughingly mentioned two hundred louis they had lost the night before. He passed the night with them and saw them at daybreak, after twelve hours of drinking and card-playing, asking themselves, while dressing, what were to be the pleasures of the day. He was invited to suppers where each one had, at his side, a woman of his own, to whom not a word was said, and who was taken with one on leaving as one would take one's stick or hat. In short, he took part in all these fancies, in all the pleasures of this free and thoughtless life, under the shelter of sadness, which the elite, alone, possess and which appear to appertain to the rest of the world, only by means of pleasure.

At first, he enjoyed it all, from the fact that he lost all trace of sadness and all unwelcome memories were blotted out. And, in fact, in such a sphere it is impossible to be preoccupied: one must enjoy oneself or depart. But Frederic was doing himself an injury, as he was losing his practise of reflection and his orderly habits, those supreme safeguards. He had not sufficient means to play for long, but, nevertheless, he played. Unfortunately, he began by winning and had all the more to lose. His clothes were made by an old tailor at Besançon who had for a

number of years worked for the family. He wrote that he no longer intended having his clothes made by him and patronized a fashionable Paris tailor. He soon found he had no time to go to the Palais de Justice; how could he, while in the company of young men who, in their busy idleness, could not even spare the time to read the newspapers? So, he prepared for his examination on the boulevards. He dined at the cafés, went to the Bois, had fine clothes and his pockets full of money. Nothing was lacking but a horse and a mistress to make him an accomplished dandy.

This is not saying little, it is true. In times gone by, a man was not a man and did not really know what it was to live, except when possessed of three things, a horse, a woman and a sword. Our prosaic and pusillanimous century, first of all, did away with the most noble, the surest and the most inseparable of these three friends to a man of heart. No longer do we have a sword at our side; and, alas! but few people possess a horse, while there are those who boast of living without a mistress.

One day, when Frederic had some pressing debts to pay, he found himself obliged to apply to his companions in pleasure, who were, however, unable to accommodate him. He finally obtained, from a banker who knew his father, three thousand francs on his note of hand. With this

sum in his pocket and feeling happy and relieved from his embarrassment, he strolled down the boulevard before returning home. When passing the corner of the Rue de la Paix to return by the Tuileries, a woman, arm in arm with a young man, began to laugh: it was Bernerette. He stopped and followed her with his eyes. She turned round several times; he changed his route, hardly knowing why, and went to the Café de Paris.

He had been walking for an hour, and was about to go to dinner, when Bernerette passed once more. She was alone. He stopped her and asked her to dine with him. She accepted and took his arm, but begged him to take her to a place not so well known.

"Let us go to a cabaret," said she gaily. "I do not care to dine in the open air."

They drove away in a cab, and as before, kissed each other a thousand times before inquiring the news.

The tête-à-tête was happy and sad memories were banished. Nevertheless, Bernerette complained of Frederic's not having come to see her: he only replied that she should well know why. She read her lover's eyes and understood that the subject must be dropped. Seated near a roaring fire as on the first day, they dreamed only of enjoying the happy chance that had once more drawn them together. The champagne

animated their gaiety and elicited from him those tender proposals, inspired by this wine of poetry, but disdained by the epicure. After dinner, they went to the theater. At eleven, Frederic asked Bernerette where he should take her: she was silent for a time, half ashamed and half alarmed. Then, throwing her arms round the young man's neck, she timidly whispered in his ear:

"With you."

He was somewhat surprised to find her free.

"And what if I am not: do you not think I love you? But I am," she immediately added, seeing Frederic hesitate. "The person who was with me just now has, perhaps, caused you to think. Did you look at him?"

"No, I saw only you."

"He is an excellent fellow, a dealer in novelties and rich. He wants to marry me."

"To marry you! Are you serious?"

"Very serious. I have not deceived him, he knows the whole story of my life, but is in love with me. He knows my mother, and proposed a month ago. My mother would not interfere with my affairs, although she was provoked when she learned that I had told him everything. He wishes me to look after his accounts. It would be a good position, for he makes fifteen thousand francs a year; unfortunately, it is impossible."

"Why? Is there some obstacle?"

"I will tell you all about it, but let us first go home."

"No. Speak frankly to me, first."

"Are you going to laugh at me? I esteem and like him; he is the best man in the world, but he is too fat."

"Too fat? What folly!"

"You have never seen him. He is both fat and short and you have such a fine figure!"

"And what of his face?"

"Not so bad. He has one merit and that is to appear good and to be so. I am more grateful to him than I can tell you, and if I had wished, even without marrying me, he would have assisted me. Nothing in the world would make me vex him, and, if I could render him a service, I would do it with all my heart."

"Then marry him, if that is how matters stand."

"He is too large: it is impossible. Let us go home and chat."

Frederic allowed himself to be led and, when he awoke on the following day, he had forgotten his late troubles and the beautiful eyes of Mademoiselle Darcy.

CHAPTER V.

Bernerette left after breakfast and would not allow him to escort her home. He put aside

the money that had been loaned him, fully resolved to pay his debts, but he was in no hurry to do so. Some time after, he had supper with Gerard. They separated only at daybreak. As he was leaving, Gerard stopped him.

"What are you going to do?" said he. "It is too late to sleep, let us have breakfast in the country."

The party was arranged. Gerard sent to awaken his mistress and told her to get ready.

"It is a pity," said he to his friend, "that you have not any one to bring with you: we would be a party of four, in that case, and could have more enjoyment."

"That is easy," answered Frederic, yielding to an impulse of amour propre. "I will write a note which your groom can take for me: although it is somewhat early, Bernerette will come, I am sure."

"Just the thing! Who is Bernerette? Is she not your grisette of former times?"

"Exactly; it was on her account you used to counsel me."

"Really?" said Gerard, laughing. "But perhaps I was right," he added, "for you are naturally constant and it is dangerous with these ladies."

As he spoke, his mistress entered. Bernerette did not keep them waiting and appeared at her best. They sent for a carriage, and, in spite of

the cold weather, they started for Montmorency. The sky was clear, the sun shining and the young men talked while the two ladies sang to them. When they had gone a league they were friends.

After arriving at Montmorency, they went horseback riding. Galloping through the woods, Frederic felt his heart throb. He never felt so much at ease: Bernerette was near him and he noticed with pride the impression made on Gerard by the young girl's charming face aglow from the rapid ride. After a long detour in the forest, they stopped on a small eminence on which were a small house and a windmill. The miller gave them a bottle of white wine and they sat down on the heath.

"We should have brought some cake with us," said Gerard. "Riding gives one an appetite and I am ravenous; we could have had a little luncheon before returning to the inn."

Bernerette took from her pocket a cheese cake she had bought as she passed through Saint-Denis, and offered it so graciously to Gerard that he kissed her hand by way of expressing his thanks.

"Let us do better," said she. "Instead of returning to the village, why not dine here? This good woman surely has a leg of mutton in the cottage. Besides, here are chicken which they can roast for us. Ask if this can be done and, while dinner is being prepared, we will take a

drive in the woods. What do you think? That will be far better than the old partridges of the *Cheval-Blanc.*"

The proposition was accepted. The miller's wife wished to refuse, but, dazzled by a gold piece that Gerard presented to her, she set to work at once and sacrificed the poultry yard. Never was there a gayer dinner. It lasted longer than the revelers had anticipated. The sun soon disappeared behind the beautiful hills of Saint-Leu: heavy clouds descended on the valley and rain began to fall.

"What are we to do?" said Gerard. "It is nearly two leagues to Montmorency and this is no summer shower that one has only to allow time for it to pass. It is a real winter rain and will last all night."

"Why so?" asked Bernerette. "A winter rain will pass like any other. Let us play cards to amuse ourselves during the time. When the moon rises, it will be fine."

The miller, as may be supposed, possessed no cards, consequently there could be no card party. Cecile, the mistress of Gerard, began to regret not being at the inn, and was anxious about her new dress. The horses were placed in shelter in a shed. Two big men, not very prepossessing in appearance, entered the room. They were the miller's sons. They asked for their supper, little pleased at finding strangers present. Gerard

was getting impatient and Frederic was out of temper. Nothing is more dismal for those, who have just been laughing, than to find their joy disturbed by some unforeseen contretemps. Bernerette, alone, was happy and nothing seemed to trouble her.

"Since we have no cards," said she, "I will propose a game. Although it is November, let us first try to find a fly."

"A fly," said Gerard. "What do you want to do with it?"

"Look for the fly and you will see."

After a diligent search, a fly was discovered. The poor thing had become torpid, owing to the approach of winter. Bernerette picked it up carefully and placed it in the center of the table. She then made them all to sit down.

"Now," said she, "let every one take a piece of sugar and place it before the fly on the table. Let us each put some money on a plate and that shall be the stake. No one must speak or move. Let the fly awake: it is already flying and will settle on one of the pieces of sugar, then leave it and go to another and so on, according to its fancy. Every time a piece of sugar attracts it, he, to whom the sugar belongs, must draw from the stake till the plate is empty and we can then begin again."

Bernerette's happy thought brought back their spirits. Her instructions were followed and two

or three more flies appeared. Each one, in the most religious silence, followed them with his eyes while they were fluttering in the air over the table. If one of them settled on the sugar, there was a general roar of laughter. An hour was spent in this manner and the rain had ceased.

"I can not endure an ill-tempered woman," said Gerard to his friend as they were returning. "One must acknowledge that cheerfulness is a great blessing, perhaps the best of all, since, if possessed of this, one can do without others. Your grisette found means of turning an hour of ennui into one of entertainment, and this alone causes me to have a better opinion of her than if she had written an epic poem. Will your love last long?"

"I can hardly tell," replied Frederic, affecting the same indifference as his companion. "If she suits you, you can try your luck."

"You are not frank, for you love her and she loves you."

"Yes, a mere caprice as before."

"Take care of these fancies."

"Now follow us, gentlemen," said Bernerette, who galloped in front with Cecile, after they had all taken to their saddles again. They drew rein on a plateau and halted. The moon was rising and gently emerged from the heavy masses of clouds, and, as she rose, the clouds seemed to flee

before her. Below the plateau, the wind was silently waving a sea of somber verdure. It was so dark that nothing could be distinguished, and six leagues from Paris you might have imagined yourself before a ravine in the Black Forest. Suddenly, a star appeared on the horizon; a great gleam of light glided over the summit of the woods and filled space in an instant. The great full-grown trees, the clumps of chestnuts, the clearings, the paths, the hills were outlined in the distance as if by magic. The travelers looked at each other, astonished and pleased to be able to see each other. "Come, Bernerette," cried Frederic, "give us a song!"

"Sad or gay?" asked she.

"As you wish. A hunting song! Perchance the echoes will reply."

Bernerette threw back her veil and began the refrain of a bugle call, but suddenly stopped. The brilliant star Venus, which was scintillating above the mountain, had caught her eye, and as if under the charm of more tender thoughts, she sang to a German tune the following verses, which a passage in Ossian had inspired in Frederic:

Oh, brightest Marvel of the cloudless night,
A silver veil's the rising mist to you,
Since it must of your lofty flaming bright
Harvest a glory which e'er turns the dew
To sparkling gems. The winds have gone to sleep,
The bowing trees their whisp'ring vigils keep.

What a heavenly race the planets run,
Their silver tracks cross golden roads o'er the sun!
Venus, fair Wonder, why hasten you so,
Smiling to leave those who weep when you go?

Lamp to the shepherds, Pearl o' the night,
None knows the source of your wonderful light!
Why wander away through the heavens to roam?
These hills be your rest, our hearts your glad home.
But if you must go, pray, linger you long
And this be my tribute—a lover's sad song!

As Bernerette sang, the rays of the moon, falling on her face, gave her a charming paleness. Cecile and Gerard complimented her on the freshness and accuracy of her voice and Frederic tenderly kissed her.

They returned to the inn and supped. At dessert, Gerard, heated by the Madeira wine of which he had partaken, became so ardent and so gallant that Cecile quarreled with him. They disputed angrily, and, Cecile having left the room, Gerard followed her, out of humor. Alone with Bernerette, Frederic asked her if she understood the cause of this quarrel.

"No," she answered. "It has nothing to do with the verses, however."

"Well! What do you think of it? This young man has taken a fancy to you. He is tired of his mistress and, one word from you would be sufficient to make him leave her."

"What does it matter to us? Are you jealous?"

"Quite the contrary: and you know very well I have no right to be. My dear child, I mean to say that neither my fortune nor my occupation permit me to be your lover. It is not only to-day that you know this and I have never deceived you on the matter. If I wished to play the *grand seigneur* with you, I should be ruined without having caused you any happiness. My allowance hardly suffices me; besides, I must soon return to Besançon. On this subject, as you perceive, I explain myself clearly, although it pains me. But there are certain things that I can not explain, so it is for you to reflect and think of the future."

"That is to say, you advise me to cultivate your friend."

"No. It is he who wishes to cultivate your acquaintance. Gerard is rich and I am not. He lives in Paris, in the midst of all pleasures, and my destiny is to be only a country lawyer. He is much pleased with you and it is, perhaps, a good thing for you."

In spite of his apparent calmness, Frederic was quite moved on speaking thus. Bernerette remained silent and went to lean on the window sill. She was crying and tried to hide her tears. Frederic noticed it and drew near.

"Leave me alone," said she. "You do not

deign to be jealous, I perceive, and I suffer without complaint. But you speak too harshly, my friend. You treat me like a little girl and hurt me without cause."

They had decided to spend the night at the inn and return to Paris the next day. Bernerette removed the handkerchief from around her neck, and, while drying her tears, knotted it about her lover's head. Then, leaning on his shoulder, she gently drew him toward the alcove.

"Ah! Cruel one!" said she, kissing him, "is there no way to make you love me?"

Frederic caught her in his arms. He thought of what he exposed himself to in giving way to a moment of tenderness: the more he was tempted to yield to it, the more he distrusted himself. He was ready to tell her he loved her, but this dangerous word expired on his lips. But Bernerette felt it in her heart and they went to sleep, both contented, the one, in not having pronounced it, the other in having understood it.

CHAPTER VI

Returning to Paris, Frederic, this time, conducted Bernerette home. He found her in such poor surroundings that he easily understood her motive in not, at first, allowing him to escort her home. She lived in a furnished house, the en-

trance being through an obscure alley. She had but two small rooms, barely furnished. Frederic attempted to question her as to the unfortunate condition to which she appeared reduced, but she hardly replied at all.

A few days later, he was coming to see her and was entering the dark passage, when he heard strange sounds issuing from the landing above. Women were shrieking; they were calling for help, threatening and talking of sending for the police. In the midst of this uproar, the voice of a young man whom Frederic soon perceived was heard above the rest. He was pale, his clothes in rags, drunk with wine and angry.

"You shall pay for this, Louise!" he shouted, bringing his fist down on the baluster, "you shall pay for this! I will hunt you up and find means to make you obey me or drive you from here. What care I for your threats and the bawling of these women! You may reckon on seeing me shortly."

Still shouting, he descended and left the house in a fury. Frederic hesitated before going up, when he suddenly caught sight of Bernerette at the head of the stairs. She explained the cause of this scene. The man who had just gone was her brother.

"You have heard that sad name, Louise," said she weeping, "and you know that it is, unfortunately, mine. My brother went this evening to

the cabaret and, when he left, this is how he has treated me, by reason of my refusal to give him money with which to continue his orgy."

In the midst of her disorder and tears, she told Frederic what she had always tried to hide from him. Her father was a carpenter and very poor and, after having horribly maltreated her during her childhood, they had sold her, at the age of sixteen, to a man no longer young. This man, wealthy and generous, had given her somewhat of an education. But he soon died and, being without means of sustaining herself, she had joined a troupe of comedians in the provinces. Her brother had followed from town to town, forcing her to give up to him whatever she made, and overwhelming her with blows and insults when she was unable to satisfy his demands. Having reached the age of eighteen, she had found means of freeing herself. But even the protection of the law could not prevent the visits of this odious brother, who terrified her with his acts of violence and dishonored her by his conduct. Such was the story that Bernerette, in her trouble, unfolded to him, a tale of which Frederic could not doubt the truth after the way in which she had revealed it.

Even if he had no love for the poor girl, he felt himself touched with pity. He learned her brother's address: a few gold pieces and firm language had the desired effect. The porter re-

ceived orders to say that Bernerette had left, if the young man appeared again. But this was doing very little to assure quiet to a woman who lacked everything. Instead of paying his own debts, Frederic paid those of Bernerette. In vain, she attempted to dissuade him: he would neither reflect on the imprudence that he was committing, nor on the results that might follow. He allowed himself to be guided by his heart and swore that, whatever happened, he would never be sorry for what he had done.

But he was soon forced to repent of it. For, to satisfy the obligations he had assumed, he was compelled to assume new ones, more difficult and more burdensome than the first. Nature had not gifted him with that careless character which, in similar cases, at least, removes the fear of any harm to come. On the contrary, of the qualities he had lost, the one remaining one was clear-sightedness. He would have become melancholy and taciturn, if that were possible at his age. His friends noticed this change in him, and he was unwilling to disclose the cause of it. In order to deceive others, he deceived himself, and through weakness or by necessity he allowed destiny to shape his course.

His language to Bernerette, however, remained unchanged. He always spoke of his approaching departure, but even while speaking thus, he did not go and saw her every day. When

he had grown accustomed to the staircase, he no longer found the alley so dark. The two small rooms, which had, at first, appeared so gloomy to him, now looked cheerful. The sun's rays penetrated in the morning, and their very smallness made them warmer: space was found for a hired piano. In the neighborhood was to be found a good restaurant, from which they had their dinner brought. Bernerette had a talent that few women possess: she was, at the same time, thoughtless and economical. But, she added to this, a still rarer virtue, being contented with everything and having no desire but the wish to please others.

I must also mention her faults. Without being idle, she lived in an inconceivable laziness. After having finished her housekeeping, light as this was, she spent the entire day on the sofa, her arms crossed. She spoke of sewing and embroidery just as Frederic spoke of his departure, that is to say, she never attempted it. Unhappily, many women are like this, especially among a certain class which has the more need of occupation than any other. There are, in Paris, certain girls, born penniless, who never held a needle and who allow themselves to die of hunger, while rubbing their hands with almond paste.

When the pleasures of the carnival began, Frederic, who attended all the balls, arrived at Bernerette's rooms at all hours, now at break of

day, now in the middle of the night. Sometimes, on ringing the bell, he wondered whether he would find her alone. And if a rival had supplanted him, had he the right to complain? Without doubt, no, for of his own free will he refused to claim this right. Shall I say it? What he feared, he also almost wished for. He would then have had the courage to leave, and his mistress's infidelity would have forced him to separate from her. But Bernerette was always alone. Seated near the fire during the day, she would be combing the luxurious hair which fell over her shoulders. If it was in the night that Frederic arrived, she would run to meet him, half dressed, her eyes almost closed and a smile on her lips. She threw herself in his arms while almost asleep, stirred up the fire and laid the supper, always alert and engaging, never asking where her lover had been. Who would have been able to resist so sweet a life, and a love so rare and so gentle? Whatever the cares of the day, Frederic went to sleep happy. And was it possible for him to awake sad when his happy little friend was going and coming about the room, preparing the bath and the breakfast?

If it be true that rare meetings and constantly recurring obstacles render the passions more active and add to pleasure the zest of curiosity, one must also acknowledge that there is a strange charm, sweeter, more dangerous, perhaps, in the

habit of living with one's beloved. This habit, it is said, leads to satiety. This may be possible: but it gives confidence, forgetfulness of self, and when love resists, it is the shelter from all fear. Lovers who see each other, only at long intervals, are never sure of their position. They prepare to be happy, wish to convince each other that they are, and look for what can not be found, that is, words in which to express their feelings. Those who live together, have no need to explain themselves. They are sympathetic, exchange glances and hold each other's hands. They alone enjoy a delicious freedom, the sweet languor of the morrow. They rest from transports of love in friendship. I have sometimes thought of these charming bonds on seeing two swans borne along by the tide on some smooth waters.

If an impulse of generosity had at first led Frederic, it was the attraction this new life had for him that made him captive. Unhappily for the author of this story, there is but one pen, that of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, that can give interest to the familiar details of a quiet love. And that skilful writer also possessed, to embellish his naïve writings, the ardent nights of the *Ille de France* and the palm trees whose shade trembled over the bare arms of Virginia. It is in the presence of nature, at her richest, that he paints his characters. Shall I say that mine went every day to practise shooting at the Tivoli,

from there to see their friend Gerard, and thence sometimes to dine at Very's, and afterward to the theater? Shall I say how, when tired, they played draughts near the fire? Who would care to read such vulgar details? And of what use, when a word is sufficient? They loved each other and lived together. This lasted for about three months.

At the end of this time, Frederic found himself in such an awkward position that he announced to his friend the necessity of parting with her. She had expected this for some time, and made no effort to keep him. She knew he had made every possible sacrifice for her, and could do nothing but resign herself to fate and hide from him her grief. They dined together for the last time. On leaving, Frederic slipped into Bernerette's hand a paper that held all the money that remained belonging to him. She accompanied him home and was silent all the way. When the cab stopped she kissed her lover's hand, letting fall a few tears, and they parted.

CHAPTER VII

HOWEVER, Frederic had neither the intention nor the means of leaving. For one reason, the debts he had contracted, another his law practise, which kept him in Paris. He worked hard

to drive away the ennui that seized him. He no longer called on Gerard, shut himself in for a month, and only went out to go to the Palais de Justice. But the solitude in which he suddenly found himself, after such a round of dissipation, plunged him into the deepest melancholy. He passed entire days pacing up and down his room without opening a book and not knowing what to do. The carnival was at an end and the snow of February had given way to the glacial rains of March. Neither pleasure nor the companionship of his friends being any distraction to him, Frederic gave himself up bitterly to the depressing influence of this time of the year, fittingly called the dead season.

Gerard came to see him and asked the motive for such a useless seclusion. He made no mystery of it, but refused his friend's offers of help.

"It is time," said he, "to change the habits that can but lead to my ruin. It is better to endure some little ennui than to expose myself to real dangers."

He made no effort to hide the pain he felt at being separated from Bernerette and Gerard could only pity him and, at the same time, congratulate him on the determination to which he had come.

At Mid-Lent he attended the ball at the Opera. There were few people present. This last fare-

well to pleasure had not even the sweetness of a memory. The orchestra, more numerous than the public, played winter dances in the deserted place. A few masks wandered about the lobby. From their attire and their language one could perceive that society no longer graced these forgotten fêtes. Frederic was about to retire, when a domino sat down near him. He recognized Bernerette and she told him she had come only in the hope of seeing him. He asked her what she had been doing since he last saw her. She answered that she had hopes of going back to the stage and was now learning her rôle, ready for her début. Frederic was tempted to take her out to supper, but he thought of the ease with which he had allowed himself to be carried away on a similar occasion, on his return from Besançon. He shook hands with her and left the ballroom.

It is said that sorrow is better than ennui; it is sad, but unfortunately true. A well-bred person finds energy and courage with which to combat sorrow, whatever it may be: a great misfortune is often a blessing in disguise. Ennui, on the contrary, wears away and destroys a man: the spirit becomes torpid, the body inert and one's thoughts wander hither and thither. To have no reason for living, is worse than death. When prudence, interest and wisdom are opposed to some passion, it is easy enough for the first-

comer to justly blame him whom this passion is carrying away. Arguments on this subject can be found in abundance, and whether one will or not, one must yield to them. But when the sacrifice is made, when reason and prudence are satisfied, what philosopher or sophist is there who is not at the end of his arguments? And what answer can be given the man who says: "I have followed your advice, but have lost all; I have acted wisely, but I suffer"?

Such was Frederic's position. Bernerette wrote to him twice. In her first letter, she told him that life to her had become unbearable. She begged him to come and see her, from time to time, and not to entirely abandon her. He did not feel sure enough of himself to give way to this request. The second letter came some time later. "I have seen my parents again," wrote Bernerette, "and they are beginning to treat me more kindly: one of my uncles is dead, and has left us some money. I am having made, for my début, costumes that will please you and which I should like to show you. Call for a minute or two, if you are passing this way." This time, Frederic allowed himself to be persuaded. He called on his friend, but nothing of what she had told him was true. She had only wished to see him again. He was touched by this perseverance, but only felt the more keenly the necessity for resistance. At the first words he uttered

on this subject, Bernerette put her hand over his mouth.

" I know," said she. " Kiss me and go away."

Gerard was leaving for the country and took Frederic with him. The first fine days and rides on horseback made Frederic somewhat more cheerful. Gerard had done the same as he and had, so he said, dismissed his mistress. He wished to be free. The two young men rambled together through the woods and courted a pretty farmer's daughter in a neighboring hamlet. But invitations to Paris soon began to arrive. Walking was abandoned in favor of cards; the dinners became long and noisy. Frederic could not stand this life, which had formerly so dazzled him, and returned to his solitude.

He received a letter from Besançon. His father wrote to inform him that Mademoiselle Darcy was starting for Paris with her parents. And, in fact, she arrived in the course of the week. Frederic, much against his will, called upon her. He found her just as he had left her, true to her secret love, and ready to make use of this faithfulness as an excuse of coquetry. She confessed, however, that she was sorry for the somewhat unkind words which she had spoken during their last meeting at Besançon. She begged Frederic to forgive her, if she had appeared to doubt his discretion, and added that, having no wish to marry, she once more offered

him her friendship, but, for the last time. When one feels neither gay nor happy, such offers are always welcome. The young man, therefore, thanked her, and found solace in occasionally passing an evening with her.

A certain need of emotion sometimes drives the blasé to seek the extraordinary. It may seem surprising that a woman, as young as Mademoiselle Darcy, was of this strange and dangerous character: but it is, nevertheless, true that such was the case. She found no difficulty in gaining Frederic's confidence and making him tell her all about his love affairs. She might, perhaps, have been able to console him. In showing herself only coquettish toward him, she would, at least, have distracted him: but it pleased her to do the opposite. Instead of blaming him for his follies, she told him that love pardons everything and that his madness did him honor. Instead of confirming him in his resolution, she informed him that she could not understand how he could do it. "If I were a man," she would say, "and if I had as much liberty as you, nothing in the world could tear me from the woman I loved. I would willingly expose myself to every danger, if necessary, rather than give up my mistress."

Such language was peculiar, coming as it did from the mouth of a young girl whose knowledge of this world did not extend beyond

her own family. But for this very reason it was the more striking. Mademoiselle Darcy had two motives for playing this rôle, which, moreover, pleased her extremely. On one hand she wished to pass as large-hearted and appear romantic: on the other hand, she wished to demonstrate that, far from being displeased that Frederic had forgotten her, she approved of his passion. The poor boy, for the second time, was deceived by this stratagem, and allowed himself to be duped by a girl of seventeen.

"You are right," he answered her. "After all, life is so short and happiness so rare here below, that one is very foolish to reflect and inflict on oneself voluntary sorrows, when there are so many that are unavoidable."

Mademoiselle Darcy now changed her tactics.

"Does your Bernerette love you?" she asked, indifferently. "Did you not tell me that she was a grisette? What faith can you put in such a woman? Is she worthy of a sacrifice, and will she feel the price paid?"

"I do not know," answered Frederic, "and I have no great love for her myself," he lightly added. "I never dreamed, when near her, except of amusing myself. I am weary now; that is the whole story."

"Fie!" cried Mademoiselle Darcy, "what is such a passion?" Started on this subject, the young woman became excited. She spoke as if

they were discussing herself and her active imagination led her on. "Is it then love," said she, "simply to pass away the time? If you were not in love with this woman, why did you go to see her? If you love her, why do you abandon her? She suffers, perhaps is weeping for you. How can a miserable consideration for money find a place in any noble heart? Are you then so cold, as enslaved by your interests as my parents were by theirs, when they sacrificed my happiness? Is that the duty of a young man and should you not be ashamed of yourself? But no, you do not know yourself if you are suffering, nor whether you have any regrets. The first-comer might console you and your mind is only unemployed. Ah! It is not thus when one loves! I predicted, at Besançon, that you would one day know what love was. But if you have no greater courage, I tell you to-day that you will never know it."

Frederic returned home one night, after an interview of this kind. Caught in the rain, he entered a café and ordered a bowl of punch. When a long trouble has oppressed our hearts, little excitement is necessary to make it beat, and it then seems that we have in us a vase too full and overflowing. When Frederic left the café, he doubled his pace. Two months of solitude and privation were weighing on him. He felt an intolerable need of throwing off his burden

and of being at his ease once more. Without thought, he went toward Bernerette's house. The rain had ceased. By the light of the moon he noticed his friend's windows, the door and the road, which were all so familiar. He placed a trembling hand on the bell and, as before, he wondered if he would find the fire covered with ashes and the supper laid. At the moment of ringing he hesitated.

"But what harm can there be," he said to himself, "if I spend an hour here and ask Bernerette for a souvenir of our old love? What danger can I run? Since necessity separates us, why should I fear to see her once more for a moment?"

It was midnight. He gently rang and the door opened. As he was ascending the stairs, the porter called and told him no one was in. It was the first time he had found Bernerette away from home. He thought she must have gone to the theater and answered that he would wait for her; but the porter objected. After some hesitation, he finally confessed that Bernerette had gone out early and would only return the following day.

CHAPTER VIII

Of what use to pretend indifference when one is in love, unless to suffer cruelly when the truth is known? Frederic had sworn so many times that he would never be jealous of Bernerette and so often repeated it before his friends, that he had finally come to believe it himself. He walked home, whistling a waltz.

"She must have another lover," he said to himself. "So much the better for her; it is what I hoped for. From henceforth I can be at rest."

But hardly had he returned, when he experienced a feeling of mortal weakness. He sat down and placed his head in his hands, as if to collect his thoughts. After a useless struggle, nature became the conqueror. He raised his tear-stained face and found some consolation in confessing all he felt.

An extreme languor succeeded this violent shock. Solitude became intolerable and for several days he passed the time in paying calls and in endless amusement. At one time he would attempt to reassume his affected indifference: at another he gave way to blind fury, to projects of revenge. He became disgusted with life. He remembered the sad circumstance that had attended his early love: this tragic example was always before him.

"I begin to understand it," he told Gerard. "I am no longer astonished that in such cases one longs for death. One does not kill oneself for a woman's sake, but because it is useless and impossible to live when one suffers to such a degree, whatever be the cause."

Gerard knew his friend too well to doubt his despair and loved him too well to abandon him to it. He was able, by means of powerful influence, of which he had never himself made use, to obtain for Frederic the post of attaché to an embassy. He arrived one morning with an order for departure from the Foreign Minister.

"Travel," said he, "is the best and only remedy for sorrow. To induce you to leave Paris, I have been hard at work and, thank God, have met with success. If you have any courage, you will leave at once for Berne, where the minister sends you."

Frederic did not hesitate. He thanked his friend and immediately set to work to put his affairs in order. He wrote to his father to tell him of his new project and asked his consent. The reply was favorable. At the end of two weeks his debts were paid: nothing now hindered Frederic's departure and he went to get his passport.

Mademoiselle Darcy questioned him at great length, but he did not care to answer. Not having clearly seen the condition of his own heart,

he had feebly yielded to the curiosity of his young confidante. But his suffering was now too real for him to joke about it, and perceiving the danger of his passion, he had understood how frivolous was the interest taken in it by Mademoiselle Darcy. He therefore did what all men do in such cases. To help cure himself he pretended to be already cured, that a passing love affair had diverted him, but that he was now of an age to turn to more serious things. Mademoiselle Darcy, as may be believed, did not approve of such sentiments. She counted nothing serious in this world but love; all else to her seemed despicable. At least so her language led one to believe. Frederic let her talk and good-humoredly agreed with her that he would never know how to love. His heart told him the contrary, and in making himself out to be inconstant, he would have wished it true.

The more he felt his courage leaving him, the more he hastened his departure. He could not, however, relieve himself of a thought that oppressed him. Who was Bernerette's new lover? What was she doing? Should he try to see her once more? Gerard was not of this opinion: his motto was, "Do nothing by halves." From the moment Frederic had decided to leave, he counseled him to forget all. "What do you wish to know?" said he. "Either Bernerette will tell you nothing or she will hide the truth.

Since it is proven that she has another lover, of what use to make her acknowledge it? A woman is never sincere with an old lover on this subject, even when all hopes of a reconciliation are gone. Besides, what do you hope for? She no longer loves you."

It was with a purpose, and to make his friend firm, that Gerard expressed himself so forcibly. I leave those who have loved to judge of the effect it produced. But many have loved and been unaware of it. The bonds of this world, even the strongest, become undone in time. A few only are broken. Those, whose love has been lessened by absence, ennui and satiety, can not imagine what they would feel should a sudden stroke fall. The coldest heart bleeds and is opened by such a blow; he who is insensible to it is not a man. Of all the wounds inflicted on us here below by death, before the final stroke of dissolution, it is the deepest. One must have looked through eyes streaming with tears at the smile of a faithless mistress, before being able to understand these words: "*She no longer loves you.*" One must have grieved long to remember it: it is a sad experience. If I were tempted to give to the ignorant an idea of what I mean, I should tell them that I do not know which is the most cruel, to suddenly lose the woman one loves by infidelity or by death.

Frederic found no answer to Gerard's strong

language, but an instinct stronger than reason was warring within him against such advice. He took another course to reach his end. Without knowing what he wanted and with no care of what the results might be, he determined to find out what Bernerette was doing. He wore a rather fine ring, which she had often looked at with envy. In spite of all his love for her, he had never been able to make up his mind to present her with this jewel, given him by his father. He sent it to Gerard, saying that it belonged to Bernerette, and begged him to return it to her, as she had doubtless mislaid it. Gerard willingly undertook this commission, but was in no hurry to carry it out. Frederic insisted and he had to consent.

The two friends went out one morning together and while Gerard was calling on Bernerette, Frederic waited for him in the Tuileries; he joined the throng sadly. It was not without regret that he parted with a family heirloom that was dear to him. And what did he hope to gain by it? What would he find out to console him? Gerard was about to see Bernerette, and if a few words, a tear or two escaped her, would he not feel it necessary to take no notice? Frederic looked through the railing round the garden and expected at any moment to see his friend returning with an air of indifference. What did it matter? He would have

seen Bernerette: it was impossible that he would have nothing to tell him. Who knows what chance may bring about? He might possibly learn many things from this visit. The longer Gerard was in making his appearance the greater Frederic's hopes.

The sky was cloudless and the trees were commencing to put forth verdure. There is a certain tree in the Tuileries that is named the "tree of the twentieth of March." It is a chestnut-tree, which, it is said, was in bloom the day the King of Rome was born and which blossoms every year at the same time. Frederic had sat down many times beneath this tree. Dreaming, habit led him once more to the same place. The chestnut-tree was faithful to its poetic renown: its blossoms gave out the first perfume of the year. Women, children and young people were coming and going. The gaiety of spring was mirrored on every face. Frederic thought of the future, of his journey and of the country he was about to see. An anxiety mingled with hope agitated him, in spite of himself. All his surroundings appeared to call him to a new life. He thought of his father, whose pride and support he was, and from whom he had always received only marks of tenderness. Little by little, sweeter ideas and more sensible ones took possession of him. The multitude swarming around him made him dream of the variety and inconsistency of

things. And is there, in fact, a stranger spectacle than a crowd, when one reflects that each individual has his destiny? Is there anything that can give us a fairer idea of what we are worth, and of what we are in the eyes of Providence? One must live, thought Frederic, one must obey the supreme guide. We must move on even when suffering, for no one knows whither he is going. I am free and still quite young: I must take courage and resign myself.

As he was in the midst of these thoughts, Gerard appeared and ran toward him. He was pale and very much agitated.

"My friend," said he, "you must go there. Quick, let us lose no time."

"Where are you taking me?"

"To her. I counseled you to do what I thought was right. But there are occasions when our opinions are at fault, and prudence out of place."

"What then is happening?" cried Frederic.

"You will soon know. Come, let us run."

They went together to Bernerette's.

"Go up alone," said Gerard, "I will be back in a moment," and he was gone.

Frederic entered. The key was in the door, and the shutters closed. "Bernerette," said he, "where are you?"

There was no answer.

He advanced in the darkness, and by the light

of a half-extinguished fire he perceived his friend seated on the ground near the chimney.

" What is the matter? " he demanded. " What has happened? "

Still no answer.

He approached her and took her by the hand.

" Get up," said he to her. " What are you doing there? "

But hardly had he pronounced these words, when he recoiled in horror. The hand he held was icy cold and an inanimate body rolled to his feet.

Frightened, he called for help. Gerard entered, followed by a doctor. The window was opened and Bernerette placed on her bed. The doctor examined her, shook his head and gave his orders. There was no doubt of the symptoms: the poor girl had taken poison. But what poison? The doctor could not tell and tried in vain to find out. He began by bleeding her. Frederic held her in his arms and she opened her eyes, recognized and kissed him, then fell back into unconsciousness. In the evening, they gave her a cup of tea. She came back to life as if awakened from sleep. They asked then what poison she had made use of. At first she refused to answer, but pressed by the doctor, she confessed. A copper candlestick on the mantelpiece bore the marks of several splashes of lime. She had resorted to this frightful method to in-

crease the effect of a small dose of opium, the chemist from whom she had purchased it having refused to supply her with more.

CHAPTER IX

It was two weeks before she was completely out of danger. She was able to sit up and take some nourishment, but her health was broken, and the doctor declared that she would suffer from it all her life.

Frederic had never left her. He was still in ignorance of the motive that had led her to attempt her own life and was surprised that absolutely no one cared about her. During the two weeks no one had called, neither a relative nor a stranger. Was it possible that her new lover had abandoned her in such a plight? Was this abandonment the cause of Bernerette's despair? These two suppositions appeared equally incredible to Frederic, and his friend had led him to believe that she would vouchsafe no explanation on the subject. So he remained in cruel doubt, troubled by a secret jealousy, held by love and pity.

In the midst of her pain, Bernerette gave evidence of the most passionate tenderness for him. Full of gratitude for the care he took of her, she was, when with him, gayer than ever, but of

a gaiety that was melancholic, and so to speak, veiled by suffering. She made every effort to distract him and persuade him not to leave her alone. If he went out, she asked at what hour he would be back. She wished him to dine at her bedside, and to go to sleep holding his hand. To divert him, she told him endless stories of her past life. But as soon as it was a question of the present and her terrible act, she remained silent. No question and no prayer of Frederic's could obtain any response. If he insisted, she became gloomy and sad.

One evening she was in bed and the doctor had just bled her. A few drops of blood were still trickling from the scarcely closed cut. She smilingly watched a purple tear stealing down her arm, white as marble.

"Do you still love me?" said she to Frederic. "Do not all these horrors make you disgusted with me?"

"I love you," he answered, "and nothing can now separate us."

"Is it true?" she asked, embracing him. "Do not deceive me, but tell me if I am dreaming."

"No, it is not a dream. No, my dear and beautiful mistress: let us be at rest and happy."

"Alas! It is impossible, it is impossible!" she cried in anguish. Then she added in a low voice—"And if it is impossible, we must begin over again."

Although she had but murmured these last words, Frederic had heard them and shuddered. The following day he repeated them to Gerard.

"My decision is made," said he. "I do not know what my father will think of it, but I love her, and whatever happens I will not leave her to die."

In fact, he took a dangerous course, but the only one open to him. He wrote to his father and confided to him the story of his love. He forgot to mention Bernerette's infidelity and spoke but of her beauty, her constancy and the sweet obstinacy with which she had set to work to see him again, and finally of the horrible attempt she had made to take her life. Frederic's father, an old man of seventy, loved his only son more than his life. He hurried to Paris, accompanied by Mademoiselle Hombert, his sister, an aged and very devout lady. Unhappily, neither the good man nor the aunt possessed the virtue of discretion, so that no sooner had they arrived than all their acquaintances were aware of the fact that Frederic had fallen in love with a grisette who had taken poison on his account. It was soon added that he wished to marry her. The evil-disposed made a scandal of it, to the dishonor of the family. Under the pretense of defending the young man, Mademoiselle Darcy told all she knew, adding the most romantic details. In short, though trying

to ward off a storm, Frederic found it descending on him from all sides.

He was, first of all, obliged to appear before his assembled relatives and friends and to submit to a sort of examination. Not that he was treated as having erred: on the contrary, they extended toward him the greatest indulgence. But he was forced to bare his heart and to listen to the discussion of his dearest secrets. It is useless to add that nothing was decided. M. Hombert wished to see Bernerette. He called on her, had a long conversation with her and asked her a thousand questions, to which she was able to reply with a grace and naïveté that charmed the old man. Like every one else, he had had his youthful loves. He came away from this interview much troubled and disquieted. He called for his son and told him that he had decided to make a small sacrifice in favor of Bernerette, if she promised, when well again, to learn some trade. Frederic carried this proposal to his friend.

"And you, what would you do?" said she to him. "Do you mean to remain or to go?"

He answered that he should stay, but against the wishes of his family. On this point, M. Hombert was intractable. He pointed out to his son the danger, the shame and the impossibility of such a union. He made him understand, in kind and measured words, that he

would lose his reputation and ruin his future. After having forced him to reflect, he made use of an irresistible argument which from a father is all-powerful. He begged his son to do his duty and the latter promised what was asked of him. So many shocks, so many diverse interests had agitated him, that he no longer knew what to resolve upon, and seeing unhappiness on all sides, he did not dare to struggle or to choose. Gerard himself, ordinarily firm, sought in vain for some method of safety and found himself obliged to say that it must be left to Destiny.

Two unexpected events suddenly altered the course of everything. Frederic was alone one night in his room, when Bernerette entered. She was pale and her hair in disorder. An ardent fever caused her eyes to shine with frightful brightness. Contrary to custom, she was brief and imperious. She came, she said, to demand an explanation.

"Do you wish to kill me?" she demanded. "Do you or do you not love me? Are you a child? Have you need of others to act for you? Are you mad to consult your father to know whether you must keep your mistress? What do they desire? To separate us? If you also wish it, you have only to follow their advice, and if you do not wish it, still less. Do you wish to go away? Take me with you. I can never learn a trade and can not go back to the stage. How

could I, as I am? I suffer too much to wait; decide."

She spoke in this tone for nearly an hour, interrupting Frederic whenever he wished to reply. He tried in vain to calm her. Such a violent exaltation could give way to no argument. Finally, tired out, Bernerette burst into tears. The young man pressed her to his heart. He found it impossible to resist such love and carried his mistress to his bed.

"Remain there," he said to her, "and may God destroy me if I allow you to be taken away! I wish to hear and see nothing but you. You reproach me for my cowardice and you are right: but I will act now, you shall see. If my father disowns me, you must follow me: since God has willed it that I should be poor, we will live in poverty. I care nothing for my name, my family nor the future."

These words, pronounced with all the ardor of resolution, consoled Bernerette. She begged her friend to walk home with her. In spite of her fatigue, she wished to take the air. On the way they agreed on the plan they must follow. Frederic was to pretend to submit to his father's wish, but would represent to him that with small means it was impossible to risk a diplomatic career. He would ask to be allowed to continue with his law. M. Hombert would probably yield, on condition that his son forgot his foolish

love affair. Bernerette, on her side, would change her quarters; they would think her gone. She would rent a small room in the Rue de la Harpe, or somewhere near. Here she would live with such economy that Frederic's allowance would be sufficient for them both. As soon as his father returned to Besançon, he would rejoin her and live with her. They would trust in Providence. Such was the project these two lovers determined upon, and the success of which they deemed certain, as is always the case under similar conditions.

Two days later, Frederic, after passing a sleepless night, went to call on his mistress at six in the morning. An interview he had with his father was worrying him; the family was insisting on his departure for Berne and he had come to kiss Bernerette and renew his drooping courage. The room was deserted, the bed empty. He questioned the porter and learned beyond all possibility of doubt that he had a rival and was being deceived.

On this occasion he felt more indignation than sorrow. Treason was too strong, for scorn not to take the place of love. Having returned, he wrote a long letter to Bernerette, overwhelming her with the most bitter reproaches. But he tore up this letter just as he was about to despatch it. Such a miserable being did not seem worthy even of his anger. He made up his mind to

leave at the earliest possible moment. There was a vacant place in the next day's coach for Strasbourg. He reserved it and hastened to inform his father. The whole family congratulated him: no one certainly asked him by what chance he obeyed so soon. Gerard alone knew the truth. Mademoiselle Darcy declared that it was a pity and that men always were heartless. Mademoiselle Hombert added something from her savings to the small sum her nephew was taking with him. A farewell dinner reunited the family and Frederic left for Switzerland.

CHAPTER X

THE pleasures and fatigues of the journey, the attractions of a change and the occupation of his new career soon restored calm to his mind. He no longer thought but with horror of the fatal passion which had almost been his ruin. He was accorded a most gracious reception at the embassy, for he was well recommended. His appearance was in his favor, for a natural modesty enhanced the value of his talents without hiding them. He soon held an honorable position in the world, and the future appeared most promising.

Bernerette wrote several letters to him. She gaily asked him if he had left for good or did

he think of returning soon. At first he abstained from replying; but, as the letters continued and became more and more pressing, he finally lost patience. He answered and unburdened his heart. He asked Bernerette, in the bitterest words, if she had forgotten her double treachery, and begged her to spare him in the future these false protestations of which he could no longer be the dupe. He added that he thanked God that he had been enlightened in time: that his resolution was irrevocable and that he would not again see France till after a long stay abroad. Having sent this letter, he felt more at ease and entirely finished with the past. Henceforth Bernerette ceased to write to him and he no longer heard any mention of her.

A well-to-do English family lived in a pretty house in the neighborhood of Berne. Frederic was introduced to them: three young girls, the eldest of whom was but twenty, did the honors of the house. She was remarkably beautiful and soon perceived the strong impression she produced on the young attaché, and did not show herself insensible to it. He was not, however, yet sufficiently cured to give way to a new love. But after so much agitation and so much sorrow, he found need of opening his heart to feelings calm and pure. The beautiful Fanny did not become his confidante, as had been Mademoiselle Darcy. But without his telling her all his

troubles, she guessed that he had suffered and the glance of her blue eyes seemed to console Frederic; she often turned them in his direction.

Kindness leads to sympathy, and sympathy to love. At the end of three months, love had not come, but it was on the way. A man of a character as tender and expansive as Frederic could not be constant except on condition of being confiding. Gerard was right in telling him that he would love Bernerette longer than he expected. But for this it was necessary that Bernerette should love him too, or at least should appear to do so. In stirring up weak hearts, we place their very existence in danger. They must break or forget, for they have not the strength to be faithful to a memory from which they suffer. So Frederic accustomed himself, day by day, to live but for Fanny and the question of marriage soon came up. The young man was not wealthy, but his position was made and his friends powerful. Love, which removes all obstacles, pleaded for him. It was decided to ask a favor of the Court of France and that Frederic, now second secretary, should marry Fanny.

This happy day at length arrived. The couple had just been married and Frederic, in the intoxication of happiness, held his wife in his arms. He was seated near the mantel-piece. The crackling of the fire and the play of the flames caused him to tremble. By a strange

freak of memory, he thought of the day on which for the first time he had sat thus with Bernerette, near the mantel-piece in a little bedroom. Those, whose imagination is pleased to admit that man hastens ever toward the accomplishment of his fate, may comment as they please on this strange fact. At this moment a letter with the Paris postmark was handed to Frederic, announcing the death of Bernerette. I need not paint his astonishment nor his grief. I must content myself with placing before the reader's eye the poor girl's farewell to her friend. Here in a few lines written in that style, half gay, half sad, which was peculiar to her, you will find the explanation of her conduct:

"Alas! Frederic, you well knew it was but a dream. We could not live quietly and be happy. I wanted to leave here. I received a visit from a young man whom I had met in the country, in the time of my glory; he was madly in love with me at Bordeaux. I am unaware from whom he had obtained my address. He came and threw himself at my feet as if I were still the queen of the stage. He offered me his fortune, which was not much, and his heart, which was nothing at all. It was the day after you left me, saying that you were going away. You will remember. I was none too happy, my dear, and I hardly knew where to dine. I allowed

myself to be led, but unfortunately I could not adhere to it. I had sent my slippers to his rooms. I sent for them and decided to die.

"Yes, my dear, I wished to leave you there. I could not live as an apprentice. However, the second time I made up my mind. But your father called on me again: that is something you did not know. What could I say to him? I promised to forget you and returned to my admirer. Ah! How tired I was of it all! Is it my fault that all men appear ugly and foolish to me since I have loved you? But I can not live on memories. What do you think I could do?

"I do not kill myself; I do but finish a task already begun: it is not a great murder that I commit. My health is poor, forever gone. All this would be nothing if it were not for ennui. I am told you are about to marry: is she beautiful? Good-by, good-by. Remember, when it is fine, the day that you watered your flowers. Oh! how quickly I learned to love you! On seeing you I started and became pale. I have been very happy with you. Good-by.

"If your father had not wished it, we would never have parted. But you had no money, that is the misfortune. Neither had I. If I had gone to a laundry I could never have stayed there; so what were we to do? I have now tried twice to begin anew but I am successful in nothing.

"I assure you that it is not from madness that I take my life: I am in full possession of all my mental faculties. My parents (may God forgive them) have come back again. If you only knew what they want to do with me! It is too disgusting to be the plaything of misery and to be annoyed to such an extent. When we loved each other, if we had been more economical it would have been better. But you insisted on our going to the theater and amusing ourselves. We have spent many a happy evening at *La Chaumière.*

"Good-by, my dear, for the last time, good-by. If I had been in better health I would have gone back to the stage, but I can breathe and that is all. Never reproach yourself on account of my death. I feel that, had it been in your power to avert it, nothing would have happened. I felt it, but dared not say it. I saw whither events were drifting, but did not wish to worry you.

"It is a sad night on which I write to you and sadder, I assure you, than that on which you came and rang the bell and found me out. I had never thought you jealous. When I knew you were angry, I was both sorry and pleased. Why did you not wait for me? You would have seen the expression on my face when I returned from my adventure. But it is nothing, you loved me more than you admitted.

"I wish to finish, but can not. I cling to this paper as to the rest of my life; I crowd up my lines; I would collect all my remaining force and send it to you. No, you have not known my heart. You have loved me because you are good; it was out of pity that you came and also a little for pleasure. Had I been rich, you would not have left me: that is what I tell myself, and it is the only thing that gives me courage. Good-by.

"May your father have no reason to repent for the harm of which he has been the cause! Now, I feel it, what would I not give to know something, to have in my hands some means of making a living! It is too late. If, when a child, one could see one's life in a mirror, I would not end thus; you would still love me. But perhaps not, since you are about to marry.

"How could you write me such a cruel letter? Since your father insisted and you were going to leave, I saw no harm in trying to find another lover. I have never felt the same and never have I seen anything so droll as his face when I told him I was going home.

"Your letter has hurt me cruelly. I stayed by my fire for two days without being able to say a word or to move. I was born very unhappy, my friend. You can not imagine how the good God has treated me during the twenty years of my life: it is like a game of chance.

As a child, I was beaten and when I cried I was put outside. 'Go and see if it is raining,' my father would say. When I was twelve years old I was made to polish the floor, and when I became a woman, was I not persecuted enough? My life has been spent in trying to live, and finally in seeing that I must die.

"May God bless you, you who have given me my only happy days; I then breathed the pure air; may God reward you. May you be happy and free, oh my friend! May you be loved as I love you, your poor dying Bernerette.

"Do not grieve; all will have an end. Do you remember a German tragedy that you were reading to me one night? The hero of the story demands: 'What shall we cry as we die?'—'*Liberty!*' answers little George. You wept on reading that word. Weep then—it is the last cry of your friend. The poor leave no will; but I send you a lock of my hair. One day when the hairdresser burned it with his iron, I remember that you wished to beat him. Since you did not wish them to burn my hair, you will not throw this lock of hair in the fire.

"Good-by, again good-by, forever.

"Your faithful friend,

"BERNERETTE."

I have been told that after reading this letter, Frederic made an attempt on his life. I will

not speak of it here. The indifferent too often look upon such deeds as ridiculous, when one survives. The judgment of the world is sad on this matter. He who attempts to die is laughed at, and he who dies is forgotten.

MARGOT

CHAPTER I

"And your love of long ago, Margot, do you remember it?"

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MARGOT

CHAPTER I

In a large gothic house in the Rue du Perche, au Marais, there lived, in 1804, an old lady, well known and beloved by all in the neighborhood. She was called Madame Doradour. She was a woman of the olden times, belonging, not to the court, but to the good middle class, rich, devout, cheerful and charitable. She led a very retired life: her only occupation being to give alms and play "Boston" with her neighbors. She dined at two o'clock and supped at nine. She rarely went out and then only to church, sometimes taking a turn in the Place Royale on her way back. In short, she had preserved the manners and the dress, of her times, entirely ignoring the present, reading her prayer-book, rather than the newspapers, leaving the world to go its own way and thinking only of dying in peace.

As she was a great talker, and even somewhat loquacious, she had always, during the twenty years since the death of her husband, a lady companion. This woman, who never left her, had now become a friend. They were continual-

ly seen together, at mass, out for a walk or by the fireside. Mademoiselle Ursule kept the keys of the cellar, of the cupboards and even of the writing-desk. She was a tall, dried-up woman, of masculine appearance, speaking with the tip of her tongue, extremely imperious and quite ill-tempered. Madame Doradour, who was not very large, would take the arm of this ugly creature, babbling the while: she called her "my good one," and allowed herself to be tied to her apron-strings. She had unlimited confidence in her favorite and had in advance willed her a large part of her property. Mademoiselle Ursule did not forget it and professed to love her mistress more than herself, and never spoke of her without raising her eyes to heaven with sighs of gratitude.

Needless to relate, Mademoiselle Ursule was the true mistress of the house. While Madame Doradour, buried in her armchair, was knitting in the corner, Mademoiselle Ursule, laden with her keys, majestically paraded the corridors, banged the doors, paid the tradespeople and caused the servants to swear. But as soon as the dinner hour arrived, and the guests were assembled, she timidly appeared, clad in a dark and modest dress. She bowed with compunction, knew how to keep at a distance and how to apparently abdicate her real position, of mistress of the house.

At church, no one was more devout than she, nor cast their eyes down lower. If it happened that Madame Doradour, whose piety was sincere, fell asleep in the middle of the sermon, Mademoiselle Ursule nudged her and the preacher was thankful to her. Madame Doradour had farmers, tenants and business men to deal with: Mademoiselle Ursule verified their accounts and in the matter of any arguments regarding them, she was incomparable. Thanks to her, there was not a speck of dust in the house; everything was clean, neat, rubbed, brushed, the furniture in order, the linen spotless, the china shining and the clocks regulated. All this was necessary to the housekeeper to enable her to grumble at her ease and reign in all her glory.

Madame Doradour, speaking truthfully, was by no means blind to the defects of her good friend, but during all her life she had been able to distinguish only the good in the world. Evil never seemed clear to her: she endured without understanding it. Habit, moreover, was everything to her, and for twenty years Mademoiselle Ursule had given her her arm and they had taken their coffee together. When her protégée made too loud a noise, Madame Doradour would drop her knitting, raise her head and in her small, piping voice remark: "What is the matter, my good one?" But the "good one" did not always deign to answer, or, if she entered into

particulars, she so managed it that Madame Doradour returned to her knitting, softly humming, so as to hear no more.

It was suddenly discovered, after such a long period of confidence, that Mademoiselle Ursule had been deceiving every one; her mistress to begin with. Not only did she make an income from the expenses which she regulated, but, in anticipation of the will, she appropriated clothes, linen and even jewelry. Impunity emboldening her, she went so far as to remove a casket of diamonds, which, it is true, Madame Doradour never made use of, but which she had zealously preserved in a drawer, from time immemorial, in memory of her lost charms. Madame Doradour had no wish to take proceedings against a woman she had been fond of. She was satisfied with dismissing her, and refused to see her a last time. But she suddenly found herself in such a cruel solitude, that she shed the most bitter tears. In spite of her piety, she could not help cursing the instability of things here below and the pitiless whims of fate, which will not even respect an old and demure illusion.

One of her good neighbors, M. Després, having come to console her, she asked his advice.

"What will now become of me?" she said to him. "I can not live alone, and where shall I find a new friend? She whom I have just lost was so dear to me and I was so accustomed to

her, that, in spite of the sad way in which she has rewarded me, I almost regret not having seen her once more. Who will answer for another? What confidence shall I now be able to repose in a stranger?"

"The misfortune that has overtaken you," answered M. Després, "would be doubly to be deplored if it caused a soul like yours to doubt virtue. There are in this world wretches and many hypocrites, but there are also honest folk. Take another companion, not hurriedly, but also not with too many scruples. Your confidence has been misplaced this time; that is one reason that it should not be deceived a second."

"I believe you are right," answered Madame Doradour, "but I am very sad and in a most awkward position. I do not know a soul in Paris. Could you not oblige me by making inquiries and finding an honest girl for me, who would be well treated here, and could at least give me her arm to go to Saint François d'Assise?"

M. Després, being also an inhabitant of the Marais, was neither very quick nor very well acquainted. He nevertheless began his quest, and a few days later Madame Doradour had a new companion, with whom, at the expiration of two months, she had become extremely friendly, for she was as easy-going as she was good. But at the end of three months more it became neces-

sary to eject the latest arrival, not as being dishonest, but untrustworthy.

This was a second blow for Madame Doradour. She wished to make another choice, searched through the whole neighborhood, wrote to the "*Petites Affiches,*" and yet had no success.

She became discouraged and this good old lady was now seen going to church alone, leaning on a stick. She had resolved, she said, to finish her days without help from any one, and she attempted, in public, to cheerfully bear her sadness and her years. But her limbs trembled as she mounted the stairs, for she was seventy years old. She was to be found in the evening near the fire, her hands folded and with bent head. She could not endure solitude; her health, already weak, soon declined; little by little she fell into a state of melancholy.

She had an only son named Gaston, who had early embraced the career of a soldier, and who was at that time doing garrison duty. She wrote to inform him of her troubles and implored him to come and assist her in her very unfortunate position. Gaston loved his mother tenderly. He asked and obtained leave of absence; but his regiment was unfortunately in garrison at Strasbourg, where, it is well known, are to be found in great numbers the prettiest grisettes in France. There are to be seen those German brunettes, combining Saxon languor with French vivacity.

Gaston was on good terms with two pretty tobacconists, who did not want him to go. He vainly attempted to persuade them and even went so far as to show them his mother's letter. They gave him so many reasons, that he allowed himself to be convinced, and delayed his departure from day to day.

Meanwhile, Madame Doradour became seriously ill. She was born so cheerful and grief was so unnatural to her, that for her it could be but a disease. The doctors did not know what to do. "Leave me alone," she would say. "I wish to die alone. Since all whom I loved have forsaken me, why should I cling to the remainder of a life in which no one is interested?"

The deepest sadness reigned in the house, and at the same time the greatest disorder. The servants, seeing their mistress at the point of death and knowing that her will was made, began to neglect her. The rooms formerly so well kept, and the furniture so neatly arranged, were now covered with dust. "Oh, my dear Ursule," cried Madame Doradour, "my good one, where are you? You would have driven away these rascals!"

One day when she was at her worst, they were astonished to see her suddenly sit up in bed, draw aside the curtains and put on her spectacles. She held in her hand a letter which had just been delivered to her and which she was unfolding

with great care. At the top of the page was a fine vignette representing the Temple of Friendship, with an altar in the middle and two hearts in flames on the altar. The letter was written in a very regular manner, the words perfectly in line, and with large flourishes to the capital letters. It was a New Year's compliment, couched somewhat as follows:

"MADAME AND DEAR GODMOTHER—It is to wish you a good and happy year that I take up my pen on behalf of the whole family, being the only one among us who is able to write. Papa, mamma and my brothers wish you the same. We have learned that you are ill, and pray God to preserve you, as He surely will. I take the liberty of sending you with this, a small present, and I am, with much respect and attachment,

"Your goddaughter and servant,
"MARGUERITE PIÉDELEU."

After having read this letter, Madame Doradour placed it under her pillow: she sent for M. Després at once and dictated to him her answer. No one in the house had any knowledge of this, but as soon as the reply was gone, the patient appeared more at ease, and a few days later found her as merry and as well as ever.

CHAPTER II

THE goodman Piédeleu was a Beauceron, that is a native of Beauce, where he had spent his life and where he fully expected to die. He was an old and honest farmer from the Hunville estate, near Chartres, the property of Madame Doradour. He had never in his life seen a forest or a mountain, for he had never left his farm but to go to town or somewhere in the neighborhood, and Beauce, as every one knows, is but a vast plain. It is true, he had seen a river, the Eure, which flowed past his house. As for the sea, he believed in it as he did in Paradise, that is to say, that he should first go and see it. Moreover, there were for him in this world but three things worthy of admiration; the tower of Chartres, a beautiful girl and a fine field of wheat. His learning did not go beyond the facts that he knew it to be warm in summer, cold in winter, and that he was aware of the last market price of wheat. But when, in the midday sun, at the hour when the farm-laborers are resting, the goodman left the farmyard to say good morning to his crops, it did one good to see his fine figure and broad shoulders stand out against the horizon. It seemed then as if the blades of grain held themselves more

erect and proud than usual, and that the plowshares shone more brilliantly. At sight of him, his men, stretched in the shade, while eating their dinner, respectfully doffed their hats, still munching great mouthfuls of bread and cheese. The cattle were contentedly chewing their cud and the horses pranced under the hand of their master patting their plump flanks. "Our country is the granary of France," the goodman would sometimes say. Then he would walk on, with bent head, looking at his straight furrows, and lose himself in contemplation.

Madame Piédeleu, his wife, had presented him with nine children, of which eight were boys, and if all the eight were not six feet high, they were not far from it. It is true that this was the goodman's height, and the mother was five feet five inches; she was the finest woman in that part of the country. The eight boys, strong as bullocks, alike the terror and admiration of the village, obeyed their father like slaves. They were, so to speak, the first and most zealous of his servants, doing in turn the work of carters, plowmen and thrashers. It was a fine sight to see these eight jolly fellows, with turned-up sleeves and their forks in their hands, building up a mow; or to meet them on Sunday going to mass, arm in arm, their father walking ahead; or again, to see them in the evening, when the day's work was over, seated round the long kitchen

table, chatting while taking their soup and clinking their pewter mugs.

In the midst of this family of giants had appeared a small creature, full of health, but quite small; it was Madame Piédeleu's ninth child, Marguerite, known as Margot. Her head did not reach her brothers' elbows, and when her father kissed her, he would always lift her up and place her on the table. Little Margot was not yet sixteen; her turned-up nose, her well-cut mouth, always smiling, her skin tinted by the sun, her plump arms and well-rounded figure, gave her the appearance of cheerfulness itself; and in truth, she was the joy of the family. Seated in the midst of her brothers, she shone and pleased the sight, like a bluebell in a field of waving corn. "In faith," the goodman would say, "I do not know how my wife happened to get me that child: it is a gift from Heaven; but nevertheless, that slip of a girl will make me happy all my life."

Margot looked after the housekeeping; Mother Piédeleu, though still robust, had let her do this, in order to accustom her, from an early age, to order and economy. Margot locked up the linen and the wine and had the full care of the pots and pans, which she did not deign to wash; but she spread the cloth, poured out the drinks, and sang them a song at dessert. The servants of the house spoke of her only as Mademoiselle Mar-

guerite, for she assumed a certain air of reserve. To sum it up, she was, as the good folks say, as pretty as a picture. I do not mean to say she was not coquettish; she was young, attractive and a daughter of Eve. But none of the boys, even the beaux of the village, dared press her waist too hard; they would have fared ill. The son of a farmer, Jarry by name, who was what is known as a bad case, had kissed her one day at a dance, and been rewarded with a good box on the ears.

M. le Curé held Margot in the highest esteem. When he had an example to quote, it was always she whom he chose. He even did her the honor one day of mentioning her in his sermon, and of giving her as a model to his flock. If the progress of intelligence, as it is said, had not done away with that ancient and honest custom of our ancestors, of giving a rose as a prize for good conduct, Margot would have carried white roses, which is worth more than a sermon; but our gentlemen of '89 have suppressed that, with many other good things. Margot could sew and even embroider; her father had wished, as well, that she should be able to read and write and also learn spelling, a little grammar and some geography. A religious Carmelite had taken charge of her education. Therefore, Margot was the oracle of the locality; as soon as she opened her mouth, the peasants were wonder-

struck. She told them that the earth was round, and they believed her. They formed a circle round her, on Sunday, when she danced on the lawn; for she had had a dancing-master and his *pas de bourrée* astonished every one. In a word, she found means to be both loved and admired at the same time, which may be accounted difficult. The reader is already aware that Margot was Madame Doradour's goddaughter, and that it was she who sent her that New Year's greeting, written on paper with a beautiful engraving at the top. This letter, hardly ten lines in all, had cost the little farmer's girl much trouble and reflection, for she was not well versed in literature. However, Madame Doradour, who had always been very fond of Margot, and who knew her as the most honest girl in the country, had determined to ask her of her father, and to make of her, if possible, her lady companion.

The goodman was in the yard one evening, all his attention concentrated on a new wheel just attached to one of his wagons. Mother Piédeleu, standing in the shed, was gravely holding the nose of a troublesome bull with a large pair of pincers, to prevent him from moving while he was being examined by a veterinary surgeon. The farm boys were rubbing down the horses, just back from the water-trough. The cattle began to come in, a majestic procession of cows moving toward the stable in the setting sun, and

Margot, seated on a bundle of hay, was reading an old number of the *Journal de l'Empire* which the Curé had loaned her.

The Curé himself appeared at this moment, approached the farmer and handed him a letter from Madame Doradour. The goodman opened the letter with respect; but he had scarce read the first lines when he was obliged to sit down on a bench, so surprised and moved was he. "To ask of me my daughter!" he cried, "my only daughter, my poor Margot!"

At these words, Madame Piédeleu, thoroughly alarmed, ran to him; the boys, who were returning from the fields, gathered round their father. Margot alone remained aside, fearing to move or even to breathe. After the first exclamations, the entire family preserved a mournful silence.

The Curé then began to speak and enumerated all the advantages that would accrue to Margot if she accepted her godmother's proposition. Madame Doradour had been a real friend to the Piédeleus and had in fact been their benefactress. She needed some one to make her life pleasant and to care for her and her home. She applied to her farmer with confidence and would be sure to treat her goddaughter well and to look after her future. The goodman listened to the Curé without saying a word, and finally asked for a few days to think it over before coming to a decision on the matter.

At the end of a week, after much hesitation and many tears, it was resolved to allow Margot to start for Paris. Her mother was inconsolable: she said it was disgraceful to make a servant out of her daughter, when she had but to choose from the handsomest young fellows of the country to become a rich farmer's wife. The Piédeleu boys, for the first time in their lives, were unable to agree together; they quarreled all day, some consenting, the others refusing; finally, the house was in an indescribable state of disorder and grief. But the farmer remembered that, in a bad year, Madame Doradour, instead of demanding her rent, had sent him a bag of money. He silenced them all and decided to allow his daughter to leave.

The day of departure arrived and a horse was harnessed to the wagon to take Margot to Chartres, where she was to take the coach. No one was in the fields that day; almost the entire village assembled in the farmyard. A complete outfit had been presented to Margot: the back, the front and the inside of the wagon were encumbered with boxes and parcels of all description: the Piédeleus did not wish their daughter to cut a bad figure in Paris. Margot had bid good-by to all, and was about to embrace her father, when the Curé took her by the hand and addressed her with a few words of fatherly advice on her journey, her future life and the dan-

gers she was about to experience. "Preserve your virtue, young girl," cried the worthy man, "it is the most precious of all treasures; look after that and God will reward you."

Farmer Piédeleu was moved to tears, although he had not clearly understood all the Curé had said. He pressed his daughter to his heart, let her go, then came back and embraced her again; he wished to speak, but his grief made him dumb. "Remember always the advice of M. le Curé," said he, at last, in an altered voice: "remember it well, my poor child. . . ." Then he added bruskly: "A thousand devil's pipes! Do not forget it."

The Curé, who was stretching out his hands to give Margot his benediction, stopped short at these words. It was to conquer his emotion that the farmer had sworn; he turned his back on the Curé and went into the house without another word.

Margot climbed into the wagon, and the horse was about to start, when they heard such a deep sob that every one turned round. They then perceived a little boy, about fourteen years old, whom nobody had hitherto noticed. He was called Pierrot and his business was not very noble, for he tended the turkeys; but he loved Margot passionately, not from love, but from friendship. Margot, on her part, also loved this poor little fellow. She had many times given him a hand-

ful of cherries or some grapes to eat with his dry bread. As he was not lacking in intelligence, she liked to talk to him and teach him what little she knew herself. As they were both about the same age, it had often happened that, when the lesson was over, the teacher and the student had played hide-and-seek together. At this very moment Pierrot was wearing a pair of wooden shoes that Margot had given him, having pitied him walking with bare feet. Standing in a corner of the yard, surrounded by his small flock, Pierrot was looking at his shoes and sobbing as if his heart would break. Margot beckoned him to approach and held out her hand. He seized it and carried it to his lips as if to implant a kiss, but placed it on his eyes instead; Margot withdrew it all bathed in tears. For the last time she said good-by to her mother and the wagon started.

CHAPTER III

When Margot climbed into the coach at Chartres, the idea of going twenty leagues, and seeing Paris, so upset her that she lost all appetite. Much saddened as she was at leaving her home, she could not help feeling curious, and she had so often heard Paris spoken of as a wonderful place, that she could hardly imagine

that she was going to see such a beautiful city with her own eyes. Among her stage companions was a commercial traveler, who, according to the habit of his class, did not fail to talk all the time. Margot listened to his stories with religious attention. From the few questions she hazarded, he noticed what a novice she was, and outdoing himself, he painted such an extravagant and bombastic picture of the capital that on hearing him you would not have known if it was a description of Paris or Pekin. Margot had no thoughts of doubting him, and he was not the man to stop and think that at her first step into the city she would see that he had been lying. It is in this manner that one can not much admire the supreme attraction of bragging. I remember well that once when traveling in Italy the same thing happened to me as to Margot: one of my fellow-travelers gave me a description of Genoa, which I was on my way to see. He lied on the boat which we were on, he lied in sight of the town, and even when we were in port.

Carriages coming from Chartres enter Paris by the Champs-Elysées. I leave you to imagine the admiration of a peasant girl from Beauce at the spectacle of this magnificent avenue, which has no equal in the world, and which might have been made for the triumphant entry of a hero, master of the world. The quiet and narrow

streets of the Marais appeared very dreary after such grandeur. However, when her carriage stopped in front of Madame Doradour's door, she was enchanted with the fine appearance of the house. With a trembling hand she lifted the knocker and allowed it to fall, with a feeling of fear, not unmixed with pleasure. Madame Doradour expected her goddaughter. She received her with open arms, showered kisses upon her, called her " daughter," settled her in an easy-chair and then had her supper brought to her.

Dizzy from the noise of the streets, Margot looked at the tapestries, the painted panels and the gilded furniture, but, above all, at the fine mirrors decorating the drawing-room. She, who had never done her hair but by the aid of her father's shaving-mirror, thought it charming and wonderful to see her image repeated around her in so many different manners. The refined and polished manners of her godmother and her noble and reserved way of speaking, also made a deep impression upon her. The very clothes of the good lady, her ample dress of flowered silk, her large cap and powdered hair, gave Margot much to think of and showed her that she was in the presence of a superior being. As she had a quick and easy mind, and at the same time a child's natural inclination for imitation, she had hardly chatted with Madame Doradour for an hour before she assayed to take her as her model.

She sat up, straightened her cap, and brought into play all the grammar she knew. Unfortunately a glass of very good wine that her godmother had made her drink, to recuperate her after the fatigue of the journey, had confused her ideas; she closed her eyes. Madame Doradour took her by the hand and led her to a beautiful room; after which, having kissed her once more, she wished her good night and retired.

Almost immediately some one knocked at the door; a lady's-maid entered, relieved Margot of her shawl and cap, and knelt down to undo her shoes. Margot was standing, nearly asleep, and allowed her to do as she wished. It was only when her chemise was removed that she noticed she was being undressed, and without reflecting that she was quite nude, made a deep bow to the lady's-maid. She then hurried through her prayers and quickly got into bed. From the light of her night-lamp, she saw that her bedroom also boasted of some gilt furniture and that it was adorned with one of those magnificent mirrors she loved so well. Above this mirror was a panel, and the little carved cupids appeared in her eyes as so many good spirits inviting her to admire herself. She promised herself to make full use of it, and rocked by the sweetest dreams, with a delicious feeling fell asleep.

People rise early in the country, and our little

country girl was up with the birds the following morning. She sat up in bed and perceiving in her beloved mirror her pretty face, she honored herself with a gracious smile. The maid soon appeared and respectfully asked if mademoiselle wished to take a bath. At the same time she placed upon her shoulders a robe of scarlet, which appeared to Margot no less than king's purple.

Madame Doradour's bathroom was a more worldly retreat than one would have expected such a devout lady to possess; it had been built under Louis XV. The bath, raised off the floor, was surrounded by a stucco of gilded roses, and the inevitable cupids pursued each other all over the ceiling. On the panel opposite was to be seen a copy of Boucher's " Bathers;" a copy perhaps from the hand of Boucher himself. A garland of flowers ran along the panels; a soft carpet covered the floor, and silk curtains gracefully looped allowed a mysterious glamour of light to penetrate through the half-open shutters.

Needless to say that time had somewhat tarnished all this luxury, and the gildings showed traces of age: but, for this very reason, one felt more at one's ease inhaling the lingering perfume of those sixty years of folly—the reign of the well-loved king.

Margot, alone in this room, timidly approached the bath. First she examined the gilded griffins situated at each end; she hardly dared to enter

the water, which seemed to her at least rose water. She softly dipped one leg into the water, then the other, and then remained standing in contemplation before the panel. She knew nothing about painting; the nymphs of Boucher appeared as goddesses to her; she did not imagine such women could exist on this earth, or that one could eat with hands so white, or that such small feet were possible. What would she not have given to have been as lovely! She did not guess that with her sunburnt hands she was a hundred times better than these dolls. A slight movement of the curtain broke in upon her thoughts; she started at the idea of being surprised thus, and sank into the water up to her neck.

A feeling of ease and languor soon held her in its sway. Like the children, she began by playing with the water with the corner of her gown; she then amused herself by counting the flowers and the roses in the room; then examined the little cupids, but their large stomachs displeased her. She leaned her head on the rim of the bath and looked out through the partly open window.

The bathroom was on the ground floor, and the window looked on to the garden. It was not, as you may well imagine, an English garden, but an old-fashioned French garden, better by far than any other: fine graveled walks with bor-

ders of boxwood, large flower beds brilliant with well-assorted colors, beautiful statues scattered here and there, and in the background a labyrinth of shrubs. Margot looked at the labyrinth, the dark entrance of which made her dream. The games of hide-and-seek were recalled to her memory and she was thinking that in the windings of the shrubbery there must be some fine hiding-places.

At this moment a handsome young man in the uniform of a hussar came out of the labyrinth and went toward the house. After having passed the flower beds, he came so near the window of the bathroom that his elbows shook the lattice. Margot was unable to withhold a slight exclamation called forth by her fright; the young man stopped, opened the shutters and put his head in. He perceived Margot in the bath and, although a hussar, he blushed. Margot blushed also, and the young man walked away.

CHAPTER IV

THE most unfortunate thing under the sun for every one, and especially for young girls, is that to be good is quite a struggle and that to be only reasonable, one must undergo much hardship; whereas, to do wrong one needs but to let oneself go. Homer tells us that Sisyphus was

the wisest of mortals; nevertheless the gods unanimously condemn him to roll a great stone to the top of a mountain, whence it recoils at once on the poor man, who must begin all over again. Commentators have exhausted themselves in trying to find a reason for this punishment; as for myself, I do not doubt that by means of this beautiful allegory the ancients wished to represent Wisdom. Wisdom, in fact, is that enormous rock that we roll up without ceasing, and which incessantly falls back upon our heads. Notice that the day it escapes us it is of no avail that we have pushed it up for so many years; while on the contrary, if a fool by chance does a wise action, infinite praise is bestowed upon him. Folly is far from being a stone: it is a soap-bubble which goes dancing before us, and reflecting, like the rainbow, all the colors in creation. It is true, the bubble bursts, and scatters a few drops of water in our eyes, but a new one comes to life at once, and to sustain it in the air all we need do is to breathe.

By these philosophical reflections I wish to show that it is not astonishing that Margot was somewhat in love with the young man who had seen her in her bath, and I wish also to point out that one should think none the less of her for this. When love enters our affairs, there is small need to assist it, and one knows that to

shut the door in its face is no way of refusing it admission; but in this case it entered by the window and in the following manner:

This young gentleman, in the uniform of a hussar, was none other than Gaston, Madame Doradour's son, who had torn himself away, not without much trouble, from the flirtations of the garrison, and who had just arrived at his mother's house. Heaven willed it that the room in which Margot was lodged was situated at the corner of the house, and that young man's was also there; that is to say that their two windows were almost face to face, and at the same time quite close together. Margot dined with Madame Doradour and spent the afternoon with her; but from seven in the morning till midday she remained in her room. Gaston also, the greater part of the time, was in his room during these hours, so that Margot had nothing better to do than to sew near the window and watch her neighbor. Proximity has, from time immemorial, been the cause of many troubles. There is nothing so dangerous as a pretty neighbor; were she ugly, it would not be much better, for seeing her so often, sooner or later the day arrives when one finds her pretty. Gaston had a small round mirror attached to his window, according to a bachelor's custom. He shaved before the mirror, combed his hair and tied his cravat. Margot noticed that he had beautiful blond hair, naturally

curly; this was the cause of her buying a bottle of violet hair-oil and taking good care that the two little curls of black hair which escaped from her cap were always glossy and brilliant. Finally, she noticed that Gaston had some beautiful ties and that he changed very often; so she purchased a dozen scarfs, the finest to be obtained in the Marais. Besides, Gaston had that habit which made the great philosopher of Geneva so indignant and caused him to break with his friend Grimm: he pared his nails, as Rousseau says, with an instrument made on purpose. Margot was not such a great philosopher as Rousseau; instead of being indignant, she bought a brush and to hide her hands, which were slightly red, as I have said before, she put on black mitts which only allowed the tips of her fingers to be seen. Gaston had many more fine things which Margot could not imitate; for instance, red trousers and sky-blue waistcoat embroidered in black. Margot, it is true, was the proud possessor of a scarlet flannel wrapper, but how could she equal the blue waistcoat? She pretended to have earache and made herself for morning wear a small toque of blue velvet. Having perceived a portrait of Napoleon at the head of Gaston's bed, she wished to have one of Josephine. Finally, Gaston having said one day, at breakfast, that he was fond of a good omelette, Margot conquered her timidity and per-

formed an act of courage; she declared that no one in the world could make an omelette as well as she, and that, at home, she always made them, and begged her godmother just to taste one.

Thus did the poor child try to show her modest love, but Gaston took no notice whatever. How could a bold and proud young man, accustomed to noisy pleasures and garrison life, notice this childish stratagem? The grisettes of Strasbourg set to work in a different fashion when they have some fancy in their heads. Gaston dined with his mother, then went out for the evening: and as Margot could not go to sleep till he had returned, she awaited his arrival behind her curtains. It happened several times that the young man, perceiving the light in her room, remarked to himself as he crossed the yard: "Why is not that little girl in bed?" It also happened that while making his toilette he cast on Margot an absent-minded look which penetrated to her very soul; but she would at once turn away her head and would rather have died than face that look. I must also add that in the drawing-room she did not show herself the same. Seated near her godmother, she endeavored to appear grave and reserved and to be modestly listening to Madame Doradour's chatter. When Gaston addressed her, she answered as best she could; but, what will seem strange, she answered almost without emotion. Explain who can what passes

through the mind of a girl of fifteen; Margot's love was, so to speak, locked up in her room and there she found it as soon as she entered and left it there on leaving; but she removed the key, so that no one, in her absence, might desecrate her little sanctuary.

It is easy to understand, on the other hand, that the presence of Madame Doradour should have made her circumspect and obliged her to reflect, for this presence ceaselessly called to her mind the distance that separated her from Gaston. Any other but Margot might perhaps have despaired, or rather would have cured herself, seeing the danger of her passion. But Margot had never asked herself, even in the depths of her heart, of what use was her love to be; and, in fact, is there a more senseless question than that, continually addressed to those in love: "To what will this lead you?"—"Well, good people, it will lead me to love."

As soon as Margot awoke, she jumped out of bed, and with naked feet, her cap on her head, would draw aside a corner of her curtain to see if Gaston had opened his shutters. If the shutters were closed, she quickly went back to bed, and the instant she heard the creaking of the knob, about which she was never mistaken, she would be on the watch. This moment arrived, she put on her slippers and dressing-gown, in her turn opened her window, and leaned

out looking from side to side in a sleepy manner, as if to study the weather. Then she would push one of the window-sashes in such a way as to be seen only by Gaston, placed her looking-glass on a small table and began to comb her beautiful hair. She did not know that a born coquette only shows herself in all her finery, and does not allow herself to be seen while decking herself out. As Gaston arranged his hair before her, she did the same in front of him. Hidden by her mirror, she risked timid glances, ready to lower her eyes if Gaston looked at her. When her hair was well combed and done up, she placed on her head her little cap of tulle, embroidered *à la paysanne*, which she had refused to give up. This little cap was always quite white, as was also the broad turned-down collar which covered her shoulders and gave her somewhat the appearance of a young nun. She remained thus with bare arms, in a short petticoat, awaiting her coffee. Soon Mademoiselle Pélagie, her maid, would appear carrying a tray and escorted by the family cat, an indispensable piece of furniture at the Marais, which never failed to pay its respects to Margot every morning. He then enjoyed the privilege of settling in an easy-chair in front of her, and of having half the breakfast as his share. It was for her, as one may imagine, but a pretext for coquetry. The cat, that was old and spoiled, rolled into a ball on an armchair

and gravely received kisses not meant for him at all. Margot teased it, took it in her arms, threw it on her bed, now caressing it, now teasing it. During the ten years the cat had been one of the household it had never experienced such treatment and was not exactly pleased, but patiently accepted all, being, at heart, good-natured and evincing a deep friendship for Margot. After taking her coffee, she again approached the window, again looked out to inspect the weather, and then pulled the window-frame to, but not closing it entirely. Now for a man with the instinct of a hunter this was the time to lie in wait. Margot finished dressing, and shall I say she showed herself? Not so; she was dying from a fear of being seen and from a strong desire to show herself. And was Margot a good girl? Yes, good, honest and innocent. And what was she doing? She was putting on her shoes, her skirt and her dress and from time to time one could have seen her, through the half-opened window, stretching out her arm to take a hairpin from the table. And what would she have done had one looked in? She would have closed the window immediately. Then why leave it half-open? Ask her, I can not tell.

Matters were thus, when on a certain day Madame Doradour and her son had a long private conversation. An air of mystery surrounded them and they often spoke in whispers. Shortly

after, Madame Doradour said to Margot: "My dear child, you are about to see your mother once more; we shall spend the autumn at la Honville."

CHAPTER V

THE house at la Honville was distant about a league from Chartres, and half a league from the farm where lived the parents of Margot. It was not exactly a castle, but a very fine mansion surrounded by a beautiful park. Madame Doradour did not often grace it with her presence, and for a number of years no one had been seen there but a steward. This sudden journey and the secret interviews between the young man and the old lady surprised and disturbed Margot.

Madame Doradour had arrived but two days before, and all the luggage had not yet been unpacked, when there were seen advancing across the plain ten giants, marching in good order: it was the Piédeleu family coming to pay their respects. The mother brought a basket of fruit, each of the sons held in his hand a pot of gilly-flowers, and the goodman strutted along, carrying in his pockets two enormous melons that he had chosen himself and judged to be the best in his garden. Madame Doradour accepted these presents with her usual kindness, and as she had

expected this visit from the farmer, she brought forth from her closet eight waistcoats of flowered silk for the brothers, some lace for Mother Piédeleu and for the goodman a broad-brimmed felt hat, the edge of which was turned up and held in place by a buckle of gold. Having exchanged compliments, Margot, full of joy and vigor, appeared before her people. After they had all in turn kissed her, her godmother praised her aloud, and spoke very highly of her sweetness, her goodness and her spirit, and the cheeks of the young girl, all pink from the kisses she had received, became of even a warmer color. Mother Piédeleu, seeing Margot's clothes, judged that she must be happy, and could not help, good mother that she was, telling her that she had never appeared so pretty. "My faith, 'tis true," said the farmer. "Yes, it is true," repeated a voice that caused Margot to tremble all over: it was Gaston who had just entered.

At this moment, the door having remained open, they perceived in the hall Pierrot, the little tender of turkeys, who had wept so bitterly at Margot's departure. He had followed his masters at a distance and, not daring to enter the room, from afar he timidly saluted them. "And who is this little fellow?" said Madame Doradour. "Come in, little one, come and say good morning." Pierrot bowed once more, but nothing could induce him to enter; he became red as

fire and rushed away as fast as his little legs could carry him.

"Is it really true that you think me pretty?" Margot repeated to herself, while walking alone in the park, after her people had gone home. "But what audacity men have to say such things before every one! I do not even dare to look him in the face, and how is it that he tells me aloud a thing I can not hear without blushing. He must be very much accustomed to it, or that he thinks nothing of it; still, to tell a woman she is pretty, is a great deal; it is something like a declaration of love."

At this thought Margot stopped and asked herself just exactly what a declaration of love was. She had heard a good deal on the subject, but did not very clearly understand. "How do people say that they love?" she asked herself, and she could only imagine it must be by saying "I love you." It seemed to her that it should be something quite different, that for this there should be a secret, some particular language, a mystery full of danger and delight. She had read but one novel; I do not know the title. It was an odd volume she had discovered in her father's store-room. It told of a Sicilian brigand running away with a nun, and she found many sentences quite unintelligible to her and which she had judged must be words of love. But she had heard the Curé say that all novels were but

foolishness, and it was the truth alone that she was burning to know; but whom could she dare ask?

Gaston's room, at la Honville, was not as near as in Paris. No more furtive glances, no creaking hinges. Every day, at five in the morning, a bell was quietly rung. It was the gamekeeper awakening Gaston, the bell being near his window. The young man got up and went out shooting. Hidden behind her shutters, Margot saw him, surrounded by his dogs and gun in hand, mount his horse and lose himself in the mist that covered the fields. She followed him with her eyes with as much emotion as if she had been a feudal lord's captive lady whose master was leaving for Palestine. It often happened that Gaston, instead of opening the first gate, made his horse jump it. Margot, at this sight, uttered many a sigh, half sweet, half sad. She imagined that in hunting one ran the gravest danger. When Gaston returned in the evening, covered with dust, she examined him from head to foot to assure herself he was unwounded, as if he had but just returned from a fight. But when she saw him take from his game-bag a hare or a brace of pheasants and place them on the table, she thought she saw a victorious warrior laden with the spoils of his enemy.

What she so much dreaded happened one day.

Gaston, in jumping a hedge, was thrown from his horse; he fell among branches and escaped with a few scratches. Of what deep emotion this accident was the cause! Margot's prudence almost abandoned her; at first she almost fainted. She crossed her hands and breathed a hushed prayer. What would she not have given to be able to wipe away the blood on the young man's hand? She took her finest handkerchief and put it in her pocket, the only handkerchief she possessed that was embroidered, and impatiently she awaited an opportunity of offering it to Gaston to wrap his hand in, but she did not even have this consolation. The cruel fellow being at supper, and a few drops of blood escaping from his wound, he refused Margot's handkerchief and rolled his napkin round his wrist. Margot was so disappointed that her eyes filled with tears.

She could not, however, imagine that Gaston despised her love, but he ignored it and what was she to do? At times Margot felt resigned, and at other times impatient. The most indifferent events became for her in turn moments of joy or of sorrow. A kind word, a look from Gaston made her happy all day. If he crossed the drawing-room without noticing her, if he went to bed without wishing her the customary—"Good night," she would pass the night thinking how she could have displeased him. If he sat near

her and complimented her on her tapestry, she beamed with pleasure and gratitude; if at dinner, he declined some dish she offered him, she imagined he no longer loved her.

There were certain days when she, so to speak, had pity on herself. She began to be doubtful of her beauty, and for whole afternoons would imagine herself ugly. At other moments, feminine pride rose within her; sometimes, before her mirror, she would spitefully shrug her shoulders, on thinking of Gaston's indifference. A movement of anger and discouragement would make her rumple her collar and crush her cap down over her eyes; a sudden feeling of pride would reawaken her coquetry. She would suddenly appear, in the middle of the day, decked in all her finery and in her Sunday gown, as if to protest with all her might, against the injustice of fate.

Margot, in her new condition, had preserved the tastes of her earlier life. While Gaston was hunting, she often spent her mornings in the kitchen-garden. She knew how to handle the pruning-knife, the rake and the watering-pot, and more than once had given the gardener good advice. The kitchen-garden stretched in front of the house and, at the same time, served as a flower bed; flowers, fruit and vegetables grew here in harmony. Margot was particularly fond of a large fruit wall covered with the finest

peaches. She tended it most carefully and it was she who, every day, carefully plucked some fruit for dessert. There was one peach much larger than the others. Margot could not make up her mind to pluck it; she found it so velvety and of such a beautiful purple hue, that she dared not remove it from the tree and it seemed to her that it would be almost committing a crime to eat it. She never passed by without admiring it, and had warned the gardener never to touch it, under pain of her wrath and the reproaches of her godmother. One day, at sunset, Gaston, returning from the hunt, was crossing the garden. Carried away by thirst, he stretched out his hand on passing the fruit wall and, as luck would have it, he detached Margot's favorite peach, biting into it at once without respect. She was standing a short distance away, watering a vegetable bed. She hastily ran forward, but the young man, not perceiving her, continued on his way. After one or two mouthfuls he threw away the fruit and entered the house. Margot had seen from the start that her precious peach was lost. Gaston's sudden movement and the careless manner in which he had thrown away the peach had produced a curious and unexpected result. The young girl was grieved and at the same time delighted, for she thought Gaston must have been extremely thirsty, the sun having been shining brilliantly all day, and that

this fruit must have given him pleasure. She picked up the peach, and after having blown off the dust, looked round to see that no one could perceive her and lightly kissed it. But at the same time she could not help just biting it, to get a taste. I do not know what singular thought crossed her mind, and thinking perhaps of the fruit, perhaps of herself, murmured: "Oh, you bad boy, little do you know what you are throwing away."

I ask the reader's pardon for all these childish pranks of which I am telling him, but what else can I narrate, my heroine being but a child? Madame Doradour had been invited to dinner in a neighboring castle. She took with her Gaston and Margot. The party broke up very late and night had closed in when they started back for the house. Margot and her godmother were at the back of the carriage; Gaston, seated in front, and having no one beside him, had stretched himself out on the cushion, nearly full length. It was a clear moonlight night, but the inside of the carriage was dark; a few rays of light occasionally penetrated it. The conversation lagged; a good dinner, some slight fatigue, the darkness and the soft rocking of the carriage, all tempted our travelers to sleep. Madame Doradour was the first to doze off, and, as she went to sleep, she placed her foot on the front seat, without noticing if she disturbed Gaston

The air was fresh; a thick rug over their knees covered both godmother and goddaughter. Margot, curled up in a corner, did not move, although thoroughly wide-awake, but she was very anxious to know if Gaston was asleep. It seemed to her that since her eyes were open, his should be also; she looked toward him without seeing him, and wondered if he was looking at her. Whenever a little light entered the carriage, she risked a slight cough. The young man remained motionless and the young girl dared not speak, for fear of disturbing her godmother's sleep. She stretched her head and looked out; the idea of a long journey so much resembles a long love, that, on seeing the moonlight and the fields, Margot immediately forgot that they were on their way to la Honville. She half closed her eyes, and while watching the passing trees she imagined herself leaving for Switzerland or Italy with Madame Doradour and her son. This dream, as one may think, led to many others and to such sweet ones that she abandoned herself to them entirely. She saw herself, not Gaston's wife, but his fiancée, going round the world, loved by him and having the right to love him, and at the end of the journey was—Happiness, that charming word which she incessantly repeated, and which, happily for her, she understood so little. The better to dream, she shut her eyes completely; she dozed, and by an in-

voluntary movement, she did as Madame Doradour had done. She placed her foot on the seat opposite and, as chance had it, this foot, daintily clad and very small, landed exactly on Gaston's hand. Gaston appeared to notice nothing; but Margot woke with a start. She did not immediately remove her foot, only slid it a little to one side. Her dream had enveloped her so entirely that even her awakening did not dispel it. And can one not place one's foot on the seat where one's lover is sleeping, when one starts with him for Switzerland? Little by little, however, the illusion was dissipated. Margot began to think of the foolish act of which she had just been guilty.

"Did he notice it?" she asked herself. "Is he asleep or only pretending? If he did notice it, why did he not remove his hand? And if he is sleeping, how is it this did not awaken him? Perhaps he despises me too much to show that he felt my foot; perhaps he rather likes it, and in pretending not to feel it, he is waiting for me to begin again; perhaps he thinks that I am sleeping myself. But it is not pleasant to have another's foot on one's hand, unless one loves that person. My shoe must have soiled his glove, for we have walked a great deal to-day; but perhaps he does not wish to appear to notice so small a thing. What will he say if I begin again? But he well knows I would never dare;

perhaps, he even guesses my trouble, and is amusing himself at my expense."

While thinking thus, Margot softly withdrew her foot with all possible care: this little foot trembled like a leaf. While feeling its way in the darkness, it again touched the ends of the young man's fingers, but so lightly that Margot herself scarce had time to notice it. Never had her heart throbbed so quickly; she thought herself lost, and fancied she had committed an irreparable imprudence. "What must he think?" she said to herself. "What opinion will he have of me? In what trouble am I about to find myself? I shall never dare to look him in the face. It was bad enough to have touched him the first time, but it is much worse now. How can I prove that I did not do it on purpose? Boys will never believe anything. He will laugh at me and tell every one, my godmother perhaps, and my godmother will tell my father. I shall no longer be able to show myself in the neighborhood. Where shall I go? What will become of me? Whatever I say, it is certain that I touched him twice and that never did a woman do such a thing. After what has just happened, the least that can occur is for me to leave the house." At this thought Margot shuddered. For a long time she racked her brains for means to justify herself. She thought of writing a long letter to Gaston the next day, which she would have

handed to him in secret, and in which she would explain that it was by mistake she had placed her foot upon his hand, and that she begged his pardon, and begged him to forget it. "But if he is not asleep," she thought again. "Suppose he suspects that I love him? Has he found me out? Will he be the first to-morrow to talk to me of our adventure? If he told me he loved me too? If he should make me a declaration . . ." At this moment the carriage came to a standstill. Gaston, who was really asleep, unceremoniously stretched his arms on awakening. It was some time before he remembered where he was. At this sad discovery, Margot's dreams vanished. And when the young man offered her the very hand her foot had touched, to help her to alight, she but too clearly saw that she had been traveling alone.

CHAPTER VI

Two unexpected events, the one ridiculous, the other serious, occurred almost at the same time. Gaston was one morning trying a horse, he had just purchased, in the avenue leading to the house, when a little boy, half covered in rags and almost naked, approached him resolutely and stopped before his horse. It was Pierrot, the turkey keeper. Gaston did not recognize him,

and thinking he was begging, threw a handful of coppers into the boy's cap. Pierrot pocketed the money, but instead of moving away, he ran after the horseman and once more placed himself in front of his horse a few steps farther on. Gaston called to him two or three times to get out of the way, but in vain; Pierrot still followed and placed himself in the horse's path.

"What do you want of me, you little rogue?" demanded the young man. "Have you sworn to be run over?"

"Monsieur," answered Pierrot, without moving, "I want to be your servant."

"Whose?"

"Yours, monsieur."

"Mine? And why do you ask this?"

"Simply because I want to be monsieur's servant."

"But I am in no need of a servant. Who told you I wanted one?"

"Nobody, monsieur."

"Then why do you ask?"

"I want to be monsieur's servant."

"Are you mad or are you making fun of me?"

"No, monsieur."

"Then take this and do not worry me."

Gaston threw him some more money and turning his horse, continued on his way. Pierrot sat down at the side of the avenue, and Margot, happening to pass by some time later, found him

there crying as if his heart would break. She ran to him at once.

"What is the matter, my poor Pierrot? What has happened to you?"

At first Pierrot refused to answer, but at last blurted out between his sobs, "I wanted to be monsieur's servant, and monsieur would not have me."

It was not without much trouble that Margot finally arrived at the facts of the case. At length she understood. Since she had left the farm, Pierrot had longed to see her again. Half in shame and half in tears, he poured out his troubles, and she could not help laughing at them, and at the same time being sorry for him. The poor boy, to explain his regrets, spoke in a breath of his love for Margot, of his worn-out wooden shoes, of his loneliness in the fields, of one of his turkeys that had died; all this was somewhat mixed up in his head. Finally, no longer able to bear his troubles, he had decided to come to la Honville, and offer his services to Gaston as a servant or a groom. He had been eight days in coming to this determination, and as you have just seen, he had met with scant success. He even spoke of dying rather than return to the farm. "Since monsieur will not have me," said he, as he finished his story, "and since I can not be near him like you are with Madame Doradour, I shall let myself die of hun-

ger." I need not add that these last words were accompanied by a further outburst of tears.

Margot consoled him as best she could, and taking him by the hand, led him toward the house. Then, not giving him time to die of hunger, she made him go into the kitchen and gave him some bread, ham and fruit. Pierrot, still in tears, ate with a good appetite, watching Margot the while with all his eyes. She easily made him understand that, in order to enter any one's service, one must wait for a vacancy, and she promised that on the first occasion she would formulate an application in his behalf. She thanked him for his friendship, assured him that she also liked him, wiped away his tears, kissed him on the forehead, in a motherly way, and finally persuaded him to go back. Pierrot, fully convinced, stuffed his pockets with the remnants of his breakfast. Margot presented him also with a silver crown wherewith to buy himself a waistcoat and some new shoes. Quite consoled, he seized the young girl's hands and pressed them to his lips, saying in a trembling voice: "Au revoir, Mademoiselle Marguerite." As he slowly walked away, Margot noticed that the little boy was beginning to grow manly. She remembered that he was but one year younger than she, and she made up her mind that on the next occasion she would not be so prone to kiss him.

The next day she noticed that Gaston, contrary to his custom, had not gone hunting, and that he was more carefully dressed than usual. After dinner, that is to say toward four o'clock, the young man gave his arm to his mother and they both went off in the direction of the avenue. They were talking in whispers and appeared expectant. Margot, alone in the drawing-room, was anxiously looking out of the window, when a post-chaise drove into the courtyard. Gaston ran to open the door; an old lady descended first, then a pretty young lady, about nineteen years old, elegantly attired and beautiful as day. From the welcome extended to the two visitors, Margot guessed that they were not only people of distinction, but must surely be related to her godmother. The two finest rooms in the house had been set aside for their use. When the newcomers entered the drawing-room, Madame Doradour beckoned Margot and whispered to her to retire. She did so reluctantly, and the stay of these two ladies seemed to augur little pleasure for her.

She was hesitating, the following day, whether she should go down to breakfast, when her godmother came to fetch her and introduced her to Madame and Mademoiselle de Vercelles, for so were the visitors named. On entering the dining-room, Margot saw that there was a white napkin before her usual place, which was next

to Gaston. She sat down silently, but somewhat sadly, in another place: her own was taken by Mademoiselle de Vercelles, and it was easy enough to see that the young man greatly admired his neighbor. Margot remained dumb during the meal; she served the dish in front of her and when she offered some to Gaston, he did not even appear to have heard her. After breakfast they strolled into the park. After taking a few turns in the shaded walks, Madame Doradour took the arm of the old lady and Gaston offered his to the beautiful girl. Margot, left alone, walked behind: no one thought of her or spoke to her, so she soon stopped and went back into the house. At dinner, Madame Doradour had a bottle of Frontignan opened, and as she had preserved all the good old customs, she held out her glass for the others to clink with her, as a token of friendship. They all followed suit, with the exception of Margot, who did not exactly know what to do. However, she also raised her glass slightly, hoping for encouragement. No one answered her timid action, and she put the glass down before her, without having touched its contents.

"It is a pity we are not five," said Madame de Vercelles, after dinner, "we could play bouillotte." Bouillotte was played by five people in those days.

Margot, seated in a corner, took good care

not to say she played, and her godmother proposed a hand at whist. Supper having been brought in, they begged Mademoiselle de Vercelles to sing during dessert. The young lady had to be pressed hard, but finally with a light and graceful voice she sang a merry little song. Margot, on hearing her, could not help sighing and thinking of her father's house, where it was she who sang during dessert. When it was time to retire for the night, she found, on entering her room, that two of her favorite articles of furniture had been removed, a large sofa and a little inlaid table on which she was accustomed to place her mirror when combing her hair. All trembling she half opened her window, to look for a moment at the light generally shining through Gaston's curtains. It was her nightly good-by, but this time all was dark. Gaston had closed his shutters; she crept into bed heart-broken and was unable to sleep that night.

What motives brought the two visitors and how long would their visit last? This, Margot was unable to ascertain, but it was quite clear that their presence was connected with those secret conversations between Madame Doradour and her son. Here was a mystery impossible to fathom, and whatever it might be, Margot felt that it would surely destroy her happiness. She had at first supposed these ladies to be relatives, but they were treated in too formal and polite

a way for this to be the case. Madame Doradour, during their walk, had taken great care to expatiate on the size of the park. She had whispered of the products and value of the estate; was it possibly a question of selling la Honville, and in this case, what would happen to the Piédeleu family? Would the new tenants keep the old farmers? But, on the other hand, what reason could Madame Doradour have for selling the house in which she was born, and of which her son seemed so fond, when she was so wealthy? The visitors were from Paris; they spoke of it constantly and did not seem enchanted with country life. Madame de Vercelles had mentioned, at supper, that she was often with the Empress; that she accompanied her to Malmaison, and stood well in the imperial lady's favor. Perhaps it was a question of promotion for Gaston, and, if that was the case, it was only natural to pay all these attentions to a lady of standing. Such were Margot's conjectures; but, whatever effort she made, her mind was dissatisfied, and her heart refused to allow her to admit the only likely supposition, and at the same time the only true one.

Two servants had, with great difficulty, brought a large wooden case into the apartment of Mademoiselle de Vercelles. At the moment Margot was leaving the room she heard the sound of a piano; it was the first time in her life that her

ears had been struck with such chords. She knew nothing about music beyond the country dances of the village. She stopped, full of admiration. Mademoiselle de Vercelles was playing a waltz; she began to sing and Margot softly approached the door, in order to hear the words. It was an Italian song. The sweetness of this unknown tongue appeared to Margot still more wonderful than the harmony of the instrument. Who was this fine lady who was thus voicing mysterious words in the midst of so strange a melody? Margot, overcome by curiosity, stooped and drying her eyes, still wet with tears, looked through the keyhole. She saw Mademoiselle de Vercelles in dishabille, her arms bare, her hair in disorder, lips half open and eyes turned heavenward. She seemed to see an angel; never had such a charming sight presented itself before her. She moved slowly away, dazzled and at the same time in consternation, unable to understand her emotions. But, while descending the stairs, she tremblingly repeated several times: "Oh! Sacred Virgin, what loveliness!"

CHAPTER VII

It is singular that in this world those who are most directly interested are always most easily deluded. Looking at Gaston's attitude toward

Mademoiselle de Vercelles, the most indifferent witness must have guessed him to be in love with her. But Margot did not at first perceive anything, or perhaps did not wish to see it. In spite of the grief she felt, an unexplainable feeling, that many would believe impossible, for a long time prevented her from discovering the truth: I mean that admiration which had so suddenly sprung up in her for Mademoiselle de Vercelles.

That lady was tall, blond and graceful. She did more than please: she was, if one can thus express it, of a consoling kind of beauty. There was such a singular and soft calmness in her looks and her speech that it was impossible to resist the charm she cast around her. After a few days she showed quite a liking for Margot; in fact, it was she who made the first advances. She showed her several secrets in embroidery and tapestry; she took her arm when out walking, and accompanying her on the piano, made her sing her little village songs.

Margot was the more touched by these marks of kindness, inasmuch as she was almost heartbroken. Three days of utter desolation passed, before the young Parisienne had approached and, for the first time, spoken to her. Margot trembled with pleasure, fear and surprise. She suffered at being utterly forgotten by Gaston and well guessed the reason. She

felt in this action of her rival, a sort of charm mingled with bitterness. At first she was pleased at the thought of being removed from that utter isolation, which had so suddenly oppressed her; at the same time she felt flattered at being noticed by such a beautiful creature. This beauty, which should have caused her only jealousy, enchanted her from the very first. Becoming more and more familiar, she became passionately attached to mademoiselle. After having admired her face, she praised her deportment, her exquisite simplicity, her stately bows, and even the smallest ribbon she wore. She followed her incessantly with her eyes, and listened with the deepest attention to all that she said. When Mademoiselle de Vercelles sat at the piano, Margot's eyes shone and seemed to say to every one: "Here is my good friend about to play." For thus she called her, and not without some small feeling of vanity. When they passed through the village together, the country folk would turn round and stare. Mademoiselle de Vercelles was supremely indifferent, but Margot blushed with pleasure. Almost every morning, before breakfast, she would call upon her good friend; she helped her to dress, watched her washing her beautiful white hands and listened to her singing in that sweet Italian tongue. Then she would come down into the drawing-room with her, proud if having remembered some arietta and

hummed it on the staircase. With all this, she was devoured by grief, and as soon as she was alone would burst into tears.

Madame Doradour was too light-hearted to notice any change in her goddaughter. "You seem to be pale," she would sometimes remark, "have you not slept well?" Then, without awaiting an answer, she would busy herself about something else. Gaston saw further, and when he troubled to think about it, was not mistaken as to the cause of Margot's sadness, but he told himself it was but a childish infatuation, some slight jealousy natural to women and which would soon pass away. One must observe that Margot had always avoided any occasion of being alone with him. The thought of a tête-à-tête made her tremble, and however far off she might see him, when out for a walk, she would turn away, so that the precautions she took to hide her love appeared to the young man as the result of her simple character. "Funny little girl!" he often remarked, on seeing her run away as soon as he approached her. And to tease her he had sometimes come up with her, in spite of herself. Margot would then lower her head, answer only in monosyllables, and close in on herself, so to speak, like the sensitive plant.

The days went by extremely monotonous: Gaston no longer hunted; they played but little

and rarely went for a walk. It was all conversation and two or three times a day Madame Doradour would motion to Margot to retire to leave them more to themselves. The poor girl was going and coming all the time. If she happened to enter the drawing-room at an awkward moment, she saw the two mothers nod to each other and every one was silent. When she was recalled, after a long and secret conversation, she would sit down without looking at any one and her anxiety was much like one feels at sea when a storm is heralded and slowly advances across a cloudless sky.

One morning she was passing the room of Mademoiselle de Vercelles, when the latter called her. After a few commonplace remarks, Margot noticed on one of her good friend's fingers a beautiful ring.

"Try it on," said Mademoiselle de Vercelles, "and let us see if it fits you."

"Oh, mademoiselle, my hand is not beautiful enough to be adorned with such jewels."

"Never mind that, this ring fits you exactly. I will make you a present of it on my wedding-day."

"Are you going to be married?" asked Margot, trembling.

"Who knows?" laughingly replied Mademoiselle de Vercelles. "We girls are exposed to these things every day."

I leave you to guess in what a state of anxiety these words threw Margot. She repeated them to herself a hundred times, day and night, but almost mechanically and without daring to think about it. However, shortly after supper, as the coffee was being passed round, Gaston gave her a cup which she softly pushed away, saying: "Give it to me on your wedding-day." The young man smiled, but Madame Doradour frowned and requested Margot, somewhat severely, to mind her own business.

Margot acted on these instructions. What she desired and feared so much to know, now seemed proved to her. She ran and shut herself in her room. Once there she buried her face in her hands and cried bitterly. When she had somewhat recovered, she took good care to bolt the door so that no one should witness her grief. Locked in, in this way, she felt more free and began little by little to unravel her thoughts.

In spite of her extreme youth and the mad love that possessed her, Margot had much common sense. The first thing she felt was the impossibility of struggling against fate. She understood that Gaston loved Mademoiselle de Vercelles, that the two families were in accord and the marriage settled. Perhaps, even the date of the wedding was fixed; she remembered having seen a man dressed in black writing on a stamped paper in the library; it was probably a lawyer

drawing up the deeds of settlement. Mademoiselle de Vercelles was rich and Gaston would be, after his mother's death; what could she do in face of all these arrangements, so natural, so just? She thought of this continually, and the more downcast she became, the more unsurmountable did she find the obstacles. Unable to prevent this marriage she thought that all she could do was to be absent on the day of the ceremony. She drew from under her bed a small trunk that belonged to her and placed it in the middle of the room, resolved to pack up her things and return to her parents. But her courage failed and instead of opening the trunk she sat down on it and renewed her tears. Here she remained for an hour in a really pitiable condition. The motives which had first struck her now became somewhat mixed in her mind; her tears made her dizzy, and she shook her head as if to free herself of them. While she was racking her brains to think of what she should do, she had not perceived that her candle was almost out. Suddenly she found herself in the dark; she rose and opened the door and went out to ask for a light; but it was late and every one was in bed. She went on, however, feeling her way, not thinking it was so late.

When she saw that the staircase was in darkness and that she was, so to speak, alone in the house, a sudden feeling of terror, natural in one

of her age, took possession of her. She had gone down a long passage leading from her bedroom; she stopped, hardly daring to retrace her steps. It sometimes happens that some event apparently of small importance can change the course of our thoughts; darkness, more than anything else, has this effect. The staircase of la Honville was, as in many an old habitation, constructed in an adjoining tower which it entirely filled, encircling a stone column as it ascended. Margot in her hesitation leaned on this column, the coldness of which, added to her fear and grief, froze the blood in her veins. She remained motionless for a time; a sinister thought suddenly presented itself; the faintness she experienced made her think of death, and strange to relate, this idea, which lasted but a moment and then vanished, restored her to her senses. She returned to her room and once more locked herself in until daylight.

As soon as the sun had risen she went out in the park. This year the autumn was superb; the leaves, already yellow, appeared of a golden hue. No leaves as yet had fallen from the branches, and the wind, soft and warm, seemed to hold the trees of la Honville in deep respect. The season when the birds do their last love-making had but just begun.

Poor Margot had not advanced far, when the beneficent heat of the sun seemed to gradually

ease her grief. She began to think of her father, her family and her religion. She returned to her first impulse which had been to leave and resign herself. Soon she even began to think that it was no longer as necessary as it had appeared to her the night before. She asked herself what harm she had done to be banished from the spot where had been spent the happiest days of her life. She imagined that she could remain, not without suffering, but with less suffering than if she went away. She plunged into the dark paths, now walking slowly, now rushing madly on. Then she stopped and remarked: "To love is a great thing; one must have courage to love." This word "love" and the certainty that no one in the world was aware of her passion, led her to hope in spite of herself—what? Of this she was ignorant, and for this very reason hoped the more. Her beloved secret appeared to her a treasure hidden in the depths of her heart; she could not make up her mind to tear it out; she swore to keep it there forever and to protect it against all, even though it should remain engulfed there forever. Against all reason, illusion once more took the upper hand, and as she had loved as a child after having grieved as a child, she consoled herself as a child. She thought of Gaston's blond hair and of the windows of the Rue du Perche; she tried to persuade herself that the marriage was not yet settled and

that she might have misunderstood her godmother. She laid down at the foot of a tree and, exhausted by emotion and fatigue, she soon fell asleep.

It was noon when she awoke. She looked around hardly remembering her grief. A slight noise she heard near-by made her turn her head. She saw coming toward her, under the overhanging foliage, Gaston and Mademoiselle de Vercelles. They were alone and Margot, hidden by the thick undergrowth, was invisible to them. In the middle of the walk Mademoiselle de Vercelles stopped and sat down on a seat. Gaston remained for some time standing before her tenderly watching her; then he bent his knee, placed his arms round her and kissed her. At this sight a terrible anguish seized Margot and, utterly regardless of where she was going, she rushed away toward the open country.

CHAPTER VIII

Since Pierrot had failed in the great plan he had formed of being enrolled as Gaston's servant, he had day by day become sadder. Margot's consolation had satisfied him for the time, but it lasted no longer than the provisions he had carried away with him in his pockets. The more he thought of his dear Margot, the more he thought he could not live away from her,

and, to tell the truth, the life he led on the farm and the company he kept were not likely to distract him. Now the very day of our heroine's despair, he was walking along beside the river, dreaming and driving his turkeys before him, when at a distance of about a hundred paces ahead he saw a woman running breathlessly and who, after wandering here and there, suddenly disappeared among the willows that bordered the river. This surprised and disturbed him; he also started to run, trying to catch up with the woman; but on reaching the spot where she had disappeared, he looked for her in vain in the neighboring fields. He thought she must have entered a mill that stood near-by; but at the same time he followed the watercourse with a feeling of impending catastrophe. The Eure was swollen by the late heavy rainfall, and Pierrot, feeling none too bright, found the waters more sinister-looking than usual. After a time he thought he saw something white among the reeds; he approached and stretching himself at full length on the bank he pulled toward him a body that was none other than that of Margot. The unhappy girl gave no sign of life; she was motionless, cold as marble and her eyes open and fixed.

At this sight Pierrot uttered such piercing shrieks that all the people in the mill rushed out. His grief was so violent that at first he felt in-

clined to throw himself into the water and die by the side of her he had loved so well. However, he remembered having been told that the drowned could be restored to life, if attended to in good time. The peasants maintained, it is true, that Margot was quite dead, but he would not believe them, nor allow them to place the body in the mill. He raised it on his shoulders and carried it to the hut he lived in. Heaven willed it that on the way he met the village doctor, who was starting on horseback to make his round of calls. He stopped him and made him come in to see if there remained any hope.

The doctor was of the same opinion as the peasants. Hardly had he seen the body when he cried: "Yes, she is quite dead, and there is nothing to be done but to bury her; from the state the body is in she must have been in the water more than a quarter of an hour." Saying which, the doctor went out of the cottage and prepared to mount his horse, adding that it was necessary to go before the mayor and make the declaration required by the law.

Besides loving Margot passionately Pierrot was very obstinate. He well knew she had not been in the water a quarter of an hour, since he had seen her throw herself in. He ran after the doctor and begged him in the name of heaven not to go away before making certain that nothing could be done.

"And what help do you wish me to render?" cried the doctor, out of temper. "I have not a single one of the necessary instruments."

"I will go and fetch them for you, monsieur," answered Pierrot. "Only tell me what you want and wait here for me; I will soon be back."

The doctor in a hurry to be off, bit his lips at the foolish remark he had just made about his instruments. Although he was convinced that Margot was in reality quite dead, he felt that he could not refuse to make some attempt to resuscitate her, without doing himself harm and losing his reputation. "Go on then and be quick," he said to Pierrot; "you must get a tin box which my housekeeper will give you, and you will find me here on your return. In the meantime I will wrap the body in these blankets and see what friction will do. Try at the same time to find some cinders that we can heat, but all this will only help to waste my time," he added, shrugging his shoulders and stamping: "Now then, do you understand?"

"Yes, monsieur," said Pierrot, "and to save time, if monsieur is willing, I will ride his horse."

And without waiting the doctor's permission, he clambered into the saddle and was gone. A quarter of an hour later he returned at a gallop with two large sacks full of cinders, one in front and the other behind him.

"Monsieur can see I have lost no time," said

he, pointing to the horse which was quite exhausted. "I did not waste time in talking and spoke not a single word to any one. Your housekeeper was out and I settled everything myself."

"May the devil take you!" thought the doctor, "here is my horse in a fine condition for traveling." And still muttering to himself, he began by the aid of a bladder to blow into poor Margot's mouth, while Pierrot rubbed her arms. The fire was soon blazing; when the cinders were warm, they spread them all over the bed in such a way that the body was entirely buried in them. The doctor then forced a few drops of brandy between Margot's teeth, then shook his head and took out his watch.

"I am sorry," said he impressively, "but the dead must not be allowed to injure the sick. I am expected some distance away, and must be off."

"If monsieur will but stay another half hour I will willingly give him a crown."

"No, my boy, it is impossible, and I do not want your money."

"Here it is," answered Pierrot, placing it in the doctor's hand as if he had not heard him.

It was the poor lad's entire fortune. He had withdrawn from between his mattresses all his savings and the doctor took it, of course.

"So be it, one-half hour more, but after that

I must leave without any further delay, for you can well see all this is useless."

At the end of half an hour, Margot still cold and stiff had given not the slightest sign of consciousness. The doctor felt her pulse, then, fully decided on departing, he took his cane and hat and walked toward his horse. Pierrot having no more money and seeing that his prayers were in vain, followed the doctor out of the hut, and placed himself in front of the horse with the same determined look as on the day when he had stopped Gaston in the avenue.

"What do you want?" demanded the doctor. "Do you expect me to sleep here?"

"No, monsieur," answered Pierrot, "but you must wait still another half hour; it will rest your horse." While speaking thus, he was holding in his hand a stick and watched the doctor with such a strange expression on his face that for the third time the latter returned to the hut. But this time he could not contain himself. "Curse the fellow's obstinacy!" he cried. "The fool's six francs will make me lose a louis!"

"But, monsieur," answered Pierrot, "do they not say that the drowned may even come to life after six hours?"

"Never. Where did you hear that? A fine thing for me to stay six hours in your hovel!"

"And that is what you must do," continued

Pierrot, "or else you must leave me the box, the tubes and everything else. Perhaps after seeing you blow for two hours more, I shall know how to do it myself."

The doctor might be as furious as he liked, but had to yield whether he wanted to or not and stay two more hours. After this time Pierrot, who began to despair himself, allowed his prisoner to escape. He was then left alone, standing at the head of the bed, discouraged and almost overcome. In this way he spent the rest of the day without moving, his eyes fixed on Margot. With the advent of night he rose and thought it time to go and inform the goodman Piédeleu of the death of his daughter. He went out of the hut, shutting the door behind him; as he closed it he thought he heard a weak voice calling him. He started and ran to the bed, but all was still and he thought he must have been mistaken. However, this moment of hope was sufficient to prevent him from leaving. "Tomorrow will do as well," said he to himself, sitting down again by the bed.

While attentively watching Margot he suddenly thought he noticed a change. It seemed to him that when he had started to leave her, her teeth were tightly closed and now her mouth was half open. At once he seized the doctor's instruments and like him, attempted to blow into Margot's mouth, but he did not know how to

set about it; the tubing did not work well with the bladder. Pierrot was blowing as hard as he could, but all the air he blew seemed wasted; he forced a few drops of ammonia into the girl's mouth, but it would not go beyond her throat. Again he had recourse to the tubes, but all was of no avail.

"What stupid machines!" he cried, when at last he was exhausted; "all this is useless and does no good whatever." He threw down the instruments, bent over Margot, placed his lips on hers and as a last despairing effort, blowing with all the might of his strong young lungs, he forced the breath of life into the young girl's breast. At the same moment the cinders were scattered, two dying arms were raised, falling back on Pierrot's neck. Margot heaved a deep sigh and cried out: "I am freezing, I am freezing!"

"No, you are not," answered Pierrot; "you are covered with good warm cinders."

"You are right. Why was I placed here?"

"For nothing, Margot; just to do you good. How do you feel now?"

"Not so badly. Only I am very tired. Help me to raise myself up a little."

The goodman Piédeleu and Madame Doradour, having been notified by the doctor, entered the hut at the moment the half-drowned girl, partly undressed and supported by Pierrot's

arms, was swallowing a spoonful of cherry brandy.

"Well, now! What have you been telling me?" cried the goodman. "Do you know that it is very wrong to tell one that one's daughter is dead! You had better not try it again or I shall not pass it over like this!"

Saying which, he threw his arms round his daughter's neck.

"Take care, dear father," said she, smiling. "Do not hug me too hard; it is not long since I lay as dead."

I need not paint the surprise and the joy of Madame Doradour and all Margot's relatives, who arrived one after the other. Gaston and Mademoiselle de Vercelles were also there, and Madame Doradour, having taken the goodman aside, he began to understand what was the matter. Reflection coming too late had now thrown a light on everything. When the goodman had learned that love was the cause of his daughter's despair, and that her stay with her godmother had almost cost her her life, he paced up and down the room for a while. "We are quits," said he at last to Madame Doradour in a rough voice. "I was deeply in your debt and I have paid you well." He then took his daughter by the hand and led her to a corner of the hut. "Here, unhappy girl," he said to her, showing a cloth prepared to serve as a shroud, "take this

and, if you are an honest girl, keep it for me, and do not attempt to drown yourself again." He then approached Pierrot and giving him a hearty slap on the back, said: "Why do you not speak out, sir, you who blew so well into the girl's mouth! Must I not return the crown, that you gave the doctor?"

"Monsieur, if you wish," answered Pierrot, "I am quite willing to have my crown back, but I want nothing more, believe me. Not out of pride, but although I am a mere nobody in this world . . ."

"Go away, stupid!" answered the goodman, giving him another hearty slap, "go and look after the sick one. The fellow has blown in her mouth, but has not even kissed her!"

CHAPTER IX

Ten years had elapsed. The victorious disasters of 1814 covered France with soldiers. Threatened and surrounded by all Europe, the Emperor was finishing as he had begun, and in vain, at the end of his career, was once more inspired with the genius of the campaigns in Italy. The Russian divisions, marching on Paris down the banks of the Seine, had just been routed at the battle of Nangis, where ten thousand foreigners had fallen. An officer, badly

wounded, had left the army-corps commanded by General Gérard, and was making for Étampes, passing through the Beauce. He could hardly sit on his horse; being overcome with fatigue, he knocked one night at the door of a prosperous looking farmhouse, where he asked shelter for the night. After having given him a hearty supper, the farmer, not more than twenty-five years old, brought forward his wife, a young and pretty peasant girl of about his own age and already the mother of five. On seeing her enter, the officer was unable to restrain a cry of surprise, and the handsome girl smilingly saluted him.

"Am I mistaken?" said the officer. "Were you not lady companion to Madame Doradour, and are you not named Marguerite?"

"At your service," answered the farmer's wife, "and if my memory is not at fault I am addressing Colonel Count Gaston de la Honville. Here is Pierre Blanchard, my husband, to whom I owe it that I am still in this world. Kiss my children, Monsieur le Comte; it is all that remains of a family that for many years faithfully served your own."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed the officer. "What then has happened to your brothers?"

"They fell at Champaubert and Montmirail," said the farmer's wife in a choking voice, "and our father had preceded them by six years."

"And I also," continued the officer, "I have lost my mother, and by this single death I have lost as much as you." Speaking thus, he wiped away a tear.

"Come, Pierrot," he gaily added, addressing the husband and holding out his glass, "let us drink to the memory of the dead, my friend, and to the health of the children! There are rough times in life; the only thing is to know how to surmount them."

The following day, on leaving the farm, the officer thanked his hosts, and as he was mounting his horse he could not resist saying to the farmer's wife:

"And your love of long ago, Margot, do you remember it?"

"Well, Monsieur le Comte," answered Margot, "it remained in the river."

"And with monsieur's permission," added Pierrot, "I shall not go and bring it back."

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